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POCKET NOVELS

The Red Wizard.



PLANTING AND CULTIVATION

OF THE SOUTHERN STATES

AND THE WESTERN TERRITORIES

AND THE ISLANDS OF THE PACIFIC

AND THE ADJACENT SEAS

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THE RED WIZARD:

OR,

THE CAVE CAPTIVE.

BY LIEUT. NED HUNTER.

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THE RED WIZARD;

OR,

THE CAVE CAPTIVE.

CHAPTER I.

THE YOUNG SQUAW.

"Ef yer strike that gal, by ther heavings erbove I'll send er bullet through yer skull or bury my knife in yer heart," and the speaker's demeanor told that the words were not idle ones.

"You are uncommonly tender of a squaw!" was the sneering reply, though the man drew back and restored the hatchet he had drawn to his belt.

"Am I?" and his black eyes flashed fire.

"Yes, for I have heard that you trappers and scouts make it a point to kill every Indian you come across."

"It may be the case with some, but it hain't my way, man. When it comes ter fightin' I always try ter do my share of ther killin', but murder in cold blood ain't in my line. No, sir! An' what's more, no man ain't er goin' ter do it while I am erround, without he calkerlates ter fight with Wash Lawton."

"Lawton is right and you wrong, Parsons," said a third man, breaking in upon the conversation. "The squaw has done us no injury, and the wholesale butchery that so many appear to delight in, is not only against reason but the most common humanity."

"Yes, I know I'm right," answered the confident scout. "Ef it war er spy now, and thar war er party of Injuns out-lyin' eround, ther case would be different. But this am er gal, and er young and pooty one fer her tribe, and I hain't goin' ter see her erbused, nohow."

"And I am on your side," chimed in the physician.

"You'll see what will come of it," growled Parsons, as he turned sulkily away. "Even if it is nothing but a girl, she has eyes and ears and feet, and can carry the news far. You might just as well spare a rattlesnake because it was little. They all have poison."

"Wal," returned the unabashed scout, "I never knew any harm ter come by doin' er good action even ter er Injun. And, let me tell yer one thing, mister; those who are ther most bloody-minded always come ter thar worst and most sudden end."

"And now," continued the doctor, as Parsons disappeared, "suppose you talk to the girl and tell her she shall not be injured. I presume you understand the lingo?"

"Thar isn't one between heal and ther mountings that I hain't had somethin' ter do with, fust or last. Ther gal am er Sioux."

"How can you tell that?"

"Jest as easierly as kin be," and he turned to and began addressing her in her native tongue.

The little train of emigrants had been about camping for the night in a little belt of timber by the side of a river when George Parsons had come suddenly upon a young squaw lying, ambushed as he presumed, in a thicket, and the girl would have been brained had not the scout interposed.

When spoken to in her mother tongue, by the scout, she arose and conversed freely, and for the first time the physician saw one with a red skin that had some claims to beauty; for her form was straight, her eyes soft in expression, though fire was hidden in them, her hair long but finer than the generality, and of intense blackness, her features regular and the mouth small and lips thin, her complexion a light olive. To add to all, she was neatly dressed.

Her story, as told to the scout and interpreted by him, was a simple one. Traveling alone from one village to another, her pony had fallen and escaped from her, and after following the trail until night was at hand, she was preparing to camp when she was surprised.

"Ask her if she isn't hurt," suggested the doctor; "it strikes me that she is in pain and trying to conceal it."

The scout did so, and for answer the squaw let her blanket slip from one shoulder.

"Great heaven!" shouted the doctor; "arm broken and no fuss made about it!"

He drew near and was about to lay his hand upon the injured limb, but the squaw drew back, and, with her remaining hand touched her knife in a significant manner.

"He is a medicine," explained the scout.

In an instant the girl became calm and submitted to the manipulations of the physician. The fractured member was set and bandaged in the most approved fashion. She evidently experienced great relief, and though she could not thank the doctor with her tongue, she did with her eyes in a very forcible manner.

"Now tell her," continued the doctor, "that she will have to keep quiet. I have known slighter fractures result dangerously—inflammation set in, and all that sort of thing. And tell her, too, that you and I will protect her and see that she has a comfortable place to sleep, and something to eat, and that she shall ride with us as far as she pleases."

The information was duly given, and received with unconcealed pleasure, though with little of demonstration, save the simple words:

"Washtado Chemockomaun."

"And that is?" asked the doctor of the scout.

"Good white-man."

"Well, it is something to receive praise from one of her race. And now, Wash, you take care of her. I will see her again in the morning and try to have her comfortable before she leaves us. I never saw one so patient before under suffering in all my practice."

"It is thar nature. But I want to see ther leetle blue-eyed gal in ther camp that—"

"Hush! What noise was that?"

It proved that some of the men who had been scouting about had caught a pony and brought him in. It was the squaw's own beast. Wash, at her request, saw that he was fastened at a little distance and properly fed. Then he turned his attention again to its mistress.

She followed him, partook thankfully of food, and though

she declined to accept of his offer to sleep in one of the wagons, she crept beneath, did not refuse an extra blanket, and when he last looked at her she was apparently enjoying a healthy slumber.

But, how long she remained no one could say. Just before dawn there was an alarm of Indians, and when matters again became quiet they looked and found that both she and her pony had disappeared.

"It am ther nature of ther beast," said the scout. "But she will not ferget our kindness, doctor, and ef ever she kin do us er good turn yer kin safely bet yer life that she will."

"And bring the whole tribe down upon us," suggested George Parsons.

"Then mind yer hain't ther fust ter lose yer scalp," rejoined the scout.

The little caravan started again and journeyed until the western sun warned them to prepare for the night. This took place in nearly the center of a considerable prairie, with nothing worthy of the name of timber in sight. It was then noticed that Parsons—who had ridden ahead during the afternoon—had not returned, and it was suggested by some that he might have been captured by the Indians.

"I don't think it likely," replied the scout, "fer I hain't seen no signs. When er man starts on er huntin'-trail he never kin tell whar the end will be. But all we've got to do am ter keep er sharp look-out."

Midnight came and the missing man had not returned. But their own fate was on trial, and in what followed the missing man was forgotten.

CHAPTER II.

THE SUDDEN AWAKENING.

"LISTEN to me, Olive, and believe that I feel very deeply the words my tongue utters. You have become very dear to me—dearer than any thing else of this world—and I love you, Olive."

The girl glanced swiftly up from under her long lashes, then drooped her eyes again and her face was crimsoned with blushes, and the little hand he had obtained and was holding firmly, though tenderly, trembled fitfully, and nothing save a sigh escaped her lips.

"Olive," he continued, drawing still nearer to her, "it can not be that I am mistaken—that you look coldly upon me—that you take no pleasure in my society—can not be that you have not seen the true state of my heart? Tell me, am I disagreeable to you?"

"Oh! no, no," she murmured, in deep agitation.

"Then, darling—may I not call you so? Give me hope for the future. When we have finished our journey and the shores of the Pacific are reached, may I not believe you will become mine—be my wife?"

As actions speak even louder than words, so hers told him all he desired to know, and with the clouds of doubt drifted away from their souls, peace came, and love given and returned made them very happy.

Like all unmarried men who cross the plains, when there are pretty women in the company, the doctor, Ernest Mayo, soon found that he had a heart, and that its longings took but one direction.

He met Olive Myers for the first time—a girl slightly his junior, with a fair, pure face, laughing blue eyes, hair of the color of the ripe chestnut when just bursting from the shell, and a mouth that appeared to woo kisses. She was of good parentage (though now an orphan) and well educated.

She was drifting California-ward with an uncle and his

family, and as Mayo was a gentleman, gladly accepted his company and protection.

More secure from molestation during the lonely night-watches than at any other time, she was accustomed to keep him company, and this night, when no one was within hearing, the intensity of their hearts strung to passion found vent for the first time.

With his arm around her waist, with one hand clasped in his, with her head resting on and showering down its wealth of chestnut curls upon his shoulder, they remained whispering such impassioned words as only lovers use untill near the hour for changing the guard. Then the girl suddenly asked if Parsons had returned.

"No, dearest," he answered. "Do you take an interest in him?"

"I have no interest in any one but you," she answered, turning her blushing face to him and proffering her lips for a kiss. "But I fear him."

"Fear him? On what account?"

"Not for myself, but you, darling."

"I can not understand why, Olive."

"Because, he is envious—jealous!"

"Of me?"

"Yes. He once offered me his love and I refused it, and no later than yesterday he accused me of loving you."

"Which you denied, of course," he replied with a smile.

"I neither denied nor admitted. But I fear when he learns the truth, he will seek an opportunity to injure you," and the bare anticipation made her shudder.

"Don't tremble, little one," he answered, glad of an opportunity to again kiss the red lips. "No harm will come of it. He is a coward."

"But if he should. Oh! heaven!" and her beautiful eyes became misty with tears.

"He will not, be assured. Yet I can pardon him for something of his feelings, in being robbed of so great, so lovely a prize. Olive, darling, what would I have done without you?"

"And I without you?" she murmured in response, as she gave and returned his passionate caresses.

"Indians! Indians!"

his "They sprung apart, and the scout, who had been sleeping, as he was wont to say, 'with one eye open,' was instantly upon his feet and by their side. But "wolf," had been cried so often that he was disposed to doubt its truth, and springing upon a wagon he looked abroad. The prairie lay as dead and silent as when he last looked upon it, and he would have laughed at their fears had not something in the actions of the horses arrested his attention.

"Thar's something not exactly right thar," he muttered, "for stock don't ginerally make a fuss at this time of the night."

"What do you think can be the cause?" asked the doctor, who, with the girl he loved so tenderly, had drawn near.

"That's mighty hard to tell. It may be a pack of wolves have come between them and ther wind, or ef we war near the timber I should say a b'ar, but that couldn't well be ther case heah. Howsomever, I'm goin' to find out."

"Let me go with you," suggested the doctor.

"For the love of heaven, no!" whispered the distracted Olive, clinging to his arm. "If any thing were to happen to you, darling, I should die."

"The gal am right," replied the scout, sedately, though there was a merry twinkle in his eye. "I had better go alone. Hark!"

He dropped to the ground as suddenly as if felled by a blow, and remained for some time unstirring. His entire manner had changed; all of recklessness departed, and his movements became as cunning as those of a serpent. Still keeping his recumbent position he motioned the physician and said:

"You go and put out ther fires, and mind yer don't git in the light on 'em any more than you kin help."

"But I hear nothing but some wolves whining and howling."

"Yes, wolves. That am ther very name, fer that's what Sioux stands fer. Yes, wolves. Two-legged ones, whose bite ar' death!"

"You can not mean that those sounds are counterfeit?"

"It war well done—very well done—and would have deceived most any one, but, it can't me, by er long shot."

"For goodness sake tell me what you think."

"That ther red-skins am eround—am er callin' ter one enuther, and that they'll most proberbly be down upon ther wagons like er drove of buflers, that's all !"

"Then do not venture out. Your rifle might be worth a hundred men."

"It kin do some good shootin', that am er fact. But I must try and gather in ther hosses. They am ther fust thing ther red devils will be arter. Ther hosses must be saved or we am lost. Hist ! No more talkin'. Get ther gal inter ther most likely place fer safety, and then out with ther fire and see that every one am ready fer fight. Ef I shouldn't ever come back, good-by, and may ther Lord take a likin' ter yer and—and yer sweetheart, and say that Wash Lawton did his dooty, and died like er man."

He crawled swiftly away toward the horses, and it was time some controlling spirit was among them. A few had already broken loose and were running hither and thither, with heads and tails erect, eyes wild with terror, snorting and whistling, while the remainder were straining at their halters and threatening instant stampede.

"Thar am deviltry afoot," he whispered to himself, "and ef I can't save all ther horses I'll try and git one fer ther gal ther doctor loves. Ef ther watch had been good fer any thin' it wouldn't have happened, but it is too late now."

Indeed it was. At that very instant the terrible war-whoop of the Indians rung on every side, and almost countless dark forms skulked in every direction toward one common center. Then all further attempts at concealment were useless, and, with an answering shout, the scout arose and dashed forward, determined—as he had said—to secure at least one steed.

He reached the nearest, cut away the rope, struggled to get within mounting distance, was dragged along in the mad race, nearly trampled under foot, hurried into the tall grass, lifted from his feet and thrown headlong into an ambush of his enemies. Then he was instantly bound and left helpless until the battle was over.

The war-whoop had aroused those about the wagons to a sense of danger. They crowded together like sheep when en-

circled by enemies—evidently wanting a head. Like painted demons the villains crowded around the doomed emigrants, dancing, leaping, shouting and making the most frantic gestures, accompanied by a shower of arrows, that were answered by the sharp ringing of rifles.

Then the savages rushed forward *en masse*, and the battle became hand-to-hand. The massacre of men and helpless women and innocent children followed, while the air rung with shrieks for mercy and the groans of the dying as they were cut down, hewed by hatchets, pierced by arrows, crushed by clubs, scalped and hurled into the plundered and burning wagons, even before life was extinct.

An hour after, three wretched prisoners—all that survived of the band of emigrants—were dragged along with ropes around their necks—tied to the horses' tails of the exultant Indians—three only—Olive, the doctor and the scout.

A forced march brought them to a village of the Indians, and the two men were bound and thrown into a wigwam, while the girl was given into the care of the squaws.

What a sudden and bitter awakening from dreams of safety and of love!

CHAPTER III.

WHAT HATE WILL MAKE A MAN DO.

STUNG to the quick by the refusal of his love, and still more so by the somewhat tyrannical conduct of the scout, seconded by the physician, George Parsons suddenly determined upon a bitter revenge.

A frontier born and bred man, he had from childhood been brought in association with the Indians, and knew their ways. Under pretense of hunting, he deserted from the little band to whom he had sworn fealty, and immediately sought for the enemies of the white man.

Fortune favored him. He came across an outlying spy—trailed his rifle, and turning the open palms of his hands toward him, advanced. It was a sort of freemason sign, well

known to all the dwellers of the prairies, and it was not long before he and the Indian reached the main body of the savages, and he was soon seated in council with them.

But the Indians, crafty as treacherous, inquired deeply into the motives that made a man thus turn against his own people, and give them to the tomahawk and scalping-knife, or to torture.

"There is a girl among them whom I would make my wife," was the answer.

"Then why does the pale-face not take her?" questioned the chief.

"Because they are too many, and she will have nothing to do with me—loves somebody else."

"Why, then, is not the scalp of the lover at the belt of the brave?"

"That's just what I want, but I have never had a fair chance. Then, too, there is the guide of the party who has more than once insulted me—a trapper who has been here before—knows every foot of the ground, and I presume you know him."

"What sort of a man is the scout?"

Parsons described him minutely, and the Indians looked quickly from one to the other, and though there was no intimation given in words, yet it was evident that they both knew and feared him.

"How many of the pale-faces?"

Parsons enumerated them, and gave an inventory of the train and its means of defense.

"Will the pale-face fight?"

"No. I don't owe any of them a grudge, except as I have told you, and it wouldn't look well for me to be murdering my own people."

"Tell the red-man how the girl looks, that she may not fall by the arrow or the knife."

He did as requested, and found himself forced to endure a searching cross-questioning, for the Indians still feared treachery.

"If the tongue of the pale-face travels the short trail of truth," continued the chief, "he shall be as a brother to the red man. But if his talk twists as the path of the serpent,

“Then he shall die the same death of torture that he would give to his enemies.”

“You will find every thing as I have said.”

“Then it will be well. Let him give his weapons to the red-man.”

“But I might want to use them.”

“Until the braves return from the dogs of the pale-faces, he will be taken care of—be a prisoner.”

This was very much more than he had bargained for. But resistance would have been useless, and with any thing but pleasant feelings he handed over rifle, knife, and hatchet.

“I will go with you and show you the way,” he said, seeking to gain their favor.

“The red man needs nothing but the stars to guide them at midnight—nothing but the smoke of the pale-man’s fire to tell them where he lies hidden. Let the braves take him to the Medicine and tell him to keep him safe until they return. If his words are true he has nothing to fear. If not, he will learn what it is to be treacherous to the red-man. The Sioux are great warriors and they laugh at the traps of their enemies.”

At a signal from the chief the arms of the white renegade were bound behind his back, and accompanied by half a dozen stalwart braves, he was led through and beyond the group of wigwams, out into the forest, and when he questioned where they were going, the only answer he could obtain was:

“To the Medicine.”

A short journey and they reached a bluff by the side of a stream that found its way through a rocky cañon. A low, peculiar whistle called from a well-concealed opening the old trickster, who was supposed to hold communion with the moon and stars, the dead, and the great Manitou.

“The great Medicine of the Sioux,” said the leader of the party, “will take care of the pale-face until the warriors return.”

“It is well. Follow me.”

Unable to resist, the already frightened man followed his appointed keeper into the rocky cavern, and by his direction took a seat at the extreme rear. And as his eyes became

somewhat accustomed to the darkness, saw that he was surrounded by every thing that was devilish and horrible—by the bones and skulls and scalps of dead men—by bats and owls—by a hideous living bear and a grinning, snarling, spitting wildcat, that exerted all their monstrous strength to tear loose and spring upon him.

"The pale-face will be safe here," said the Medicine, with an almost fiendish smile. "No one will come to do him any harm while I am gone. The air is strong with blood. I can smell it—the blood of the miserable pale-face. I must go and prepare for the torture."

"For the sake of mercy do not leave me alone."

"These," pointing to the savage animals, "will keep you company. But you shall be doubly guarded."

He disappeared for a few moments. Then returned with a handful of brush with the green leaves still clinging to them. These he spread across the cavern, then tore away a stone, and instantly a dozen great, hideous, crawling, hissing rattlesnakes wriggled forth.

"Oh, God!" burst in accents of agony from the lips of the tortured prisoner, as he sunk back to the uttermost limit that was possible.

"These will keep guard over you—see that no one enters and that you do not go out," replied the Medicine, with a devilish grin.

The serpents coiled, twined, twisted, reared their heads, clashed their scales, shook their rattles, darted out their forked tongues and flashed their eyes, that looked like great balls of fire. And momentarily he expected them to creep toward, to coil around, to sting him to death!

"These," repeated the Medicine, "will be your guard."

"And when, in the name of heaven, will you come back?"

"Perhaps to-night—perhaps to-morrow. But, fear not, for you will be safe as long as you remain quiet. If you attempt to escape, a dreadful death will follow."

From the moment the reptiles had been set free, the Medicine had stood at the door of the cavern, through which a little light came in. Now he quickly retreated, shutting the entrance after him, and, more dead than alive, George Par-

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sons was left to the most horrid companionship that the mind can think of. Every moment he expected would be his last, and hours passed of sufficient misery to have driven him stark mad.

He knew not the serpents could not reach him—knew not that the subtle power of the white-ash leaves the Medicine had scattered controlled the serpents far more effectually than fire would have done.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TEST OF LOVE.

"WAL," was the characteristic exclamation of the scout, though in a low, cautious whisper, as soon as they were alone, "ef this hain't er finishin' er trail about as suddint as any thin' I ever heard tell on."

"And my poor Olive," groaned the physician. "If it were not for her I could face death without a tremor."

"That hain't 'tall likely," was the reply. "Ther best on us can't do that. I've tried it more'n once—hain't no coward—and I know. But that isn't ther thing to be looked arter now, and thar hain't no use mournin' till ther time comes, nuther. Yet I hope ter heaven ther red-skins won't know me, fer it will go hard ef they do."

"Is there no way in which we can save the life of the poor girl?" continued his companion, his thoughts being intent upon her and not giving the slightest heed to what was being said.

"I don't know yet. Ther first thing ter be done is tew git ourselves clear. Ther red devils have tied me fer sartin, and they'll have er high old time ter-night."

"Do you think we shall be molested before morning?"

"It hain't likely, unless ther cussed whisky should drive them so mad that ther elders can't control them. Then thar's no tellin' what mought happen."

"And no one will come to visit us?"

"I reckon not. But it won't matter. Thar never war wolves in a tighter trap."

"You are mistaken. See."

In a few minutes, by some juggling operation the scout had no idea of, the doctor had entirely freed himself, and also released his companion, and they could stretch their limbs at ease. Then they drew still nearer together and the conversation was continued.

"When the whisky has done its work, do you think we can get away?" asked the physician.

"That's mighty hard ter tell."

"And poor Olive, is there any hope for her?"

"I'm goin' ter see."

The scout laid his ear to the ground and remained silent for some time. Then he gently raised one side of the curtains of the wigwam and crept out into the darkness, and the doctor remained alone until the sun was well up.

Then he was dragged forth to the council of braves!

But astonishment was painted upon the faces of all as they saw that his hands were free, and that the scout had disappeared.

"Some traitor has done this!" thundered the chief. "What has become of the other prisoner?"

"That is more than I can tell," responded the physician, who had determined upon his line of conduct. "As to my being untied it was done by spirits. Ask your great Medicine. He will tell you, for he is familiar with them."

"The pale-face talks like a squaw!" sneered the chief.

"What says the great Medicine of the Sioux?"

At the command of the old trickster other ropes were brought. With these he fettered the prisoner in the most complex manner, and he was again thrust into the wigwam. Then wild and dismal groans were heard, low whisperings and frantic laughter, and the physician stepped forth free again, carrying his bonds in his hands!

Although far less superstitious than the majority, the chief was nonplussed—knew not what to say. It was a thing that had never occurred before, and he was at a loss how to act. But, something must be done, and he drew the old Medicine aside and consulted with him. The latter was pale with rage,

not unmingled with fear. He had been fairly beaten with his own weapons—fooled before all the tribe. Then he thundered forth:

“Let the pale-face tell who was concealed within the wigwam and untied his bonds, or his tongue shall be torn from his mouth and trampled under foot.”

“No one but spirits.”

“Fool Let my brothers go and look.”

A number of Indians rushed to do his bidding, but returned with faces that told of being baffled. No one was to be found.

“Did not the Medicine of the Sioux hear me talking to them?” questioned the prisoner.

There was another whispered conversation, and then the Medicine resumed: “I know how to unlock his lips and make him cease his lies,” and he gave some command in a very low tone.

In an instant after, the doctor, strong man as he was, trembled, reeled and groaned aloud. Dragged along between two of the most brutal-looking warriors, with their hatchets whirling about her head and threatening death in case of resistance, was the girl he loved!

“For Heaven’s sake save me!” she screamed, as soon as she saw him, and rushing forward threw her arms around his neck and fell almost fainting upon his bosom.

“My life for yours—a thousand deaths of torture to save you a single pang,” he murmured, as he pressed her to his heart.

“Tear them apart,” yelled the chief, and then turning to the Medicine he asked under his breath, “Where is *your* prisoner?”

“Safe in my cave.”

“There let him stay until this trial is over. Then he must be released and the girl given to him. I have so promised. Now to find out what we wish to know.”

The doctor and Olive were standing a little apart, her beautiful eyes streaming with tears, and his face convulsed with anguish.

“You love this squaw,” continued the chief, “and if you do not want to see her tortured, tell us how you managed to escape.”

"I have nothing to tell more than I have already done," he replied. "Oh Olive, Olive!"

"Then let the squaw be prepared for death!"

In an instant she was surrounded by knives—walled in so that the slightest movement would bring her soft, fair flesh against some sharp point. Her lover trembled like one with the ague, then nerved himself with a mighty effort, and returning the defiant looks around him, answered:

"Is it well, great Medicine, that I should tell to other ears than your own the secrets that are whispered by the dead?"

"The pale-face is a dog," commenced the old man, but before he could finish the sentence, a voice was heard coming from the wigwam in which the prisoner had been confined, forbidding that any thing should be told.

Then it was the Medicine's turn to tremble. He looked at the prisoner—at the wigwam—at the sky—at the earth; listened to the waving of the trees and the low whistling of the wind through the branches. But as the voice was not repeated, he, after a time, gathered courage and said:

"It is nothing. Unless the pale-face confesses, let the torture of the squaw go on."

"Oh, heaven!" shrieked the girl, "do you love me and condemn me to this when a single word would save me?"

Every accent—every glance of her eyes went to his heart far more keenly and deeper than a knife would have done, but if he failed in a single point of what he had undertaken, the rest would fall to the ground. So he kept back his own tears, choked down his grief, and endeavored to inform the wretched girl, by signs, of his purpose.

Little time, however, was given him. Indeed, before reflection could come, Olive was dragged along to where a fire-blackened post stood, bound, and half a hundred pair of hands were busy piling bark and kindling, and pitchy fagots around her.

His head fell upon his breast. He became as one numbed—helpless—powerless. Then, again, the screams of the beautiful sufferer rung upon his ears:

"Darling, I die for you. Oh, God, have mercy."

In an instant he had burst through trammel, piled in a heap those who would have restrained him, seized a brand from

the pile around his loved one, beating back those who would have opposed, had Olive again locked fast in his arms! Their lips met once—twice, and then they were torn apart, and he fettered so that a single motion was an impossibility.

"Let the hound of a pale-face untie himself now if he can," screamed the old Medicine, frantic with rage, "and the squaw sing her death-song."

"My trust is in God," replied Olive, turning her beautiful but pale face heavenward. "Darling, I pray for you."

"Then let her call upon the Manitou of her people, and see if he will come. He will not, and we will send her to him in ashes!"

The signal was given to fire the pile, and the warriors sprung forward, torch in hand. Like demons let loose they danced around, and as the lurid light flashed into the eyes of the poor girl, and the hot flames touched her skin, she fainted—sunk limp and would have fallen, had it not been for her bands. Her lover could not endure the sight, turned his head, and as he was dragged away, saw the flames rising, and believed the black smoke was wrapped like a shroud around his beautiful one—that she had passed from earth in a pillar of fire!

It was just such an ending as the Indians desired; for, failing to accomplish their purpose of forcing confession, they would have him think her dead.

CHAPTER V.

TEMPTATION.

UNMANNED, shaken to the very innermost part of his nature, and faint both from the stench of the cavern and lack of food and water, the wretched George Parsons waited the return of the Medicine until hope gave way entirely to despair.

Then a light broke in upon him; he saw the old trickster enter, take the poisonous serpents in his hands as if they had

been sticks, toss them back into their dens and close the opening, drive bear and wildcat out of sight and advance toward him with a most sardonic smile.

"The pale-face has been well guarded," he said, as if his keepers had been of the most pleasant kind.

"As I never wish to be again. God only knows what I have suffered. I expected the snakes would crawl upon me and sting me to death—expected that every moment would be my last."

"And so it would have been had I not charmed them. But come."

Never did a man get more quickly out of a hateful place. So great was his anxiety to be beyond the horrors he had endured that it forced a smile from even the grim lips of the Medicine, as he led him to a wigwam, where he was treated as a welcome guest might have been.

Relieved from terror, and with his bodily wants supplied, the first thought of the renegade was for the girl, her lover and the scout. The latter he was told had fled like a coward, but swift-footed warriors had started upon the trail and it was more than probable that his scalp was even then hanging at their belt. The lover was in confinement and would lie by torture, and the girl he could see at any time.

That time with him was then!

The sufferings he had undergone, in place of softening his heart and bringing pity, had made him still more revengeful, and when he was led into her presence his face was as black as a thunder-cloud.

"Great Heaven!" she exclaimed, instantly surmising the part he had played in the terrible drama, "you here—miserable traitor?"

"Leave us," he said to the Indians. "I would talk to her alone."

"As the pale-face wills. When he is tired of the squaw the red warriors would talk to him also."

His request having been complied with, he hissed:

"Traitor? Better that you use soft words, my lady. Do you know that both yourself and your lover are in my power?"

"But for the love of mercy do not let any harm come to

him," and she flung herself upon her knees and raised her clasped hands to him.

"His life is in your hands."

"And you will help me save it?"

"You can do so."

"How? Tell me how. I will do any thing—give my own for him."

"Let us then be friends."

"I have never felt otherwise toward you."

"Give me your hand."

She laid her little trembling fingers gently within his proffered palm, and as he drew her nearer to him, he continued:

"Now a kiss, Olive."

"No, no," she murmured, drawing back.

"You are keeping them for your lover," he sneered. "Have you forgotten that I told you his life was in your hands?"

"No, but—"

"Will you not give me a kiss?"

"If you are a man you would not ask me, knowing what you do."

"Ay, knowing what I do," he replied, bitterly, and fast losing control of his temper. "This I do know, that you scorned my love and—"

"As God is my judge I was sorry to do so and—"

"As he is my judge you shall be sorry almost unto death that you ever did. But a kiss I will have."

"Oh! heaven, are you a man or—"

"Beast?" he said, finishing the sentence for her, with a mocking laugh, and he exerted his superior strength to draw her to him.

Her quickness baffled him. She tore loose, retreated as far as possible and buried her face in her lap. But it was in vain she did so. He lifted her up again—held her hands so that she was powerless, and forcing her to look in his face, continued:

"You must and shall kiss me."

"Never!"

"It is the first move toward friendship."

"Then we shall never be friends."

"Then you are cold-hearted toward Mayo."

"Cold-hearted? God alone knows how I love him."

"And will not give even a kiss to keep him from suffering?"

"He would scorn me—would have a right to do so if I should consent—did not battle for his honor as well as my own."

"But I love you just as well."

"It can not be. You have plotted my destruction."

"With love turned to hatred and vengeance for the moment, by black despair, I might have sought to destroy. Now I would save all."

"Can you do so?" she asked, doubtfully.

"Yes—yes."

"Save him—him, as well as me?"

He knew that every word was a lie, but went recklessly on, determined to carry his point, cost what it might."

"Yes. I can and will save you both—upon one condition—that you will fly with me."

"Fly with you?" she repeated, slowly, and as if not fully comprehending. "Fly with you?"

"And be my wife."

"Coward, traitor, fiend!" she exclaimed, struggling with almost superhuman strength to get free from him. "Your wife? You, the betrayer of your own race—the murderer of those who trusted you! A thousand times would the grave be more welcome."

"But you shall, willing or unwilling. And thus I seal the compact."

He drew her still more closely to him and leaned down his face to kiss, but, in the fierceness of her utter detestation, she struck him with her little clenched hand upon his mouth until he could not restrain an expression of pain.

Then, all of restraint was thrown aside, and standing forth in his true colors, he was revealed before her with every black passion starting from his face.

"Now, by heaven! you shall be mine, and, as for your lover, he shall die with red-hot flames around him—die amid the most horrid of tortures, and even while his screams for

mercy are ringing in your ears, I will clasp you to my heart and take a hundred kisses for every one you refuse me now."

"Horror!"

"That will be no name for what he shall suffer, and all your tears and prayers and sorrow shall be of no avail toward his release, but his horrible groans be sweet music in my ears as well as those of the Indians."

"Oh, God! spare him. Oh! why has Heaven abandoned him to one whose heart is flint?"

"You have rightly named it, but you have made it so. It was as wax in your hands, but you taunted, mocked, and repulsed me. As I loved, even so can I hate."

"It shall not, must not be. I will appeal to the Indians themselves," she replied, wringing her hands in agony. "Even they must be less brutal than you."

"I have bought you of them," he answered with a smile of gratified malice. "You are mine, body and soul. Do you hear? body and soul! My wife you have got to be, and if it will make your future more happy to have your lover first burned at the stake, why, be it so. But remember now, as you will have to do in the hereafter, that his life is in your hands—that you send him to destruction when you might have saved him even from pain."

"Oh, God! save him—pity me—guide me."

"Think well and decide."

The terrible words almost drove her to distraction. She remembered with fearful minuteness how the great flames leaped, roared, danced, circled, and was rapidly giving way, when his hand touched the naked flesh of her shoulder and she instantly nerved herself, and with the stony countenance of despair, answered:

"I have decided!"

"How?"

"That I will never be your wife."

"And let your lover perish in the flames?"

"Even that were better than to stain my soul, and I can meet him in heaven, as pure as now."

"It will be long before you do so! I shall take care that you do not have an opportunity to lay violent hands upon

yourself," and happy that the words would pierce her heart like a knife, "you will be a wife without even the ceremony of marriage. Even the miserable apology the Indians sometimes indulge in shall be denied you."

"Your wife I will never be."

"I swear that you shall."

"And I, before heaven and the holy angels, that I will not. I would dash my brains out against a stone first."

"We will see whose oath is kept. Now I go to complete the means for getting rid of your lover. Then I will come and woo you for the last time."

She sunk upon her knees as he released her, and raised her hands on high while her thoughts were breathed forth in the most agonizing prayer. But even as she was doing this—even as he was unfastening the curtains of the wigwam, an Indian warrior dashed up, waving a bloody scalp.

"God! Heaven! Mercy!" burst from the lips of the heart-broken girl. "It is that of—"

She could not finish the sentence, feeling that her lover had been murdered, and fell senseless to the ground.

"It is that of the scout, thank God!" said Parsons, feeling sure that the one he stood most in dread of was forever out of the way.

CHAPTER VI

IN PERIL.

It was a terrible temptation to the scout when he crawled forth from the wigwam, to endeavor to find some weapon and at once attempt to inflict condign punishment upon the Indians, for the unprovoked murders they had been engaged in. But the folly of the proceeding when their numbers was taken into account, as well as the fact that the doctor and the beautiful girl were at their mercy, restrained him.

And what next was to be done was very difficult to determine. But the physician having thrown out a hint during

their whispered conversation, that, if he could secure his medicine-chest, he might be able to work upon the superstition of the Indians, so as to make them afraid of him, he at once took the back-track to make an investigation concerning it.

But, the journey resulted in nothing, save that he gathered the mangled bodies that had been left to the mercy of the wolves, scooped out a rude grave, placed them within, covered it with earth and sod, leveled and stamped it down, and dragging the remnants of the wagons together, kindled a fire, that would keep away the animals and obliterate the marks of what he had done.

Then he returned toward the encampment, and began spying around for something that would be of advantage, and to learn where the girl was concealed, and to take measures to steal her away, if such a thing should prove to be possible.

Chance brought him to the vicinity of the cave of the Medicine, at the very moment when he was releasing the traitor Parsons, and when the twain had departed, he could not resist the temptation to explore the bowels of the earth, and learn what it contained. But he very soon paid the penalty of his folly, and death had laid his iron hand upon him.

Not being familiar with the locality, and the mysteries contained within, he stumbled along in the darkness, came suddenly upon the hissing, snarling wild-cat, and as it sprung fiercely toward him, he leaped to avoid it, and fell directly into the clutches of the huge bear that had been watching him with open jaws and snapping eyes, and was instantly imprisoned by its mighty arms!

Had he been possessed of any weapon, even a knife—the battle would have been short and decisive. But he had nothing save his naked hands to fight with, and it would have been madness to attempt such a thing, for the brute was of monstrous size.

“Ef I don’t play ’possum I’m a gone sucker,” muttered the scout as he relaxed his muscles, fell to the rocky floor, held his breath, and remained motionless.

It was a difficult task, however, to remain so, for the bear was moving him around, and its long sharp claws scratching his flesh, and any instant his heart might be torn

out. A very difficult task indeed, and nothing but the frontier training and strong self-command of the scout enabled him to counterfeit death. Yet he did so, until almost exhausted, and then as a favorable opportunity presented itself, he rolled swiftly away, and as soon as out of reach, grunted forth, as if in answer to the astonished and angry brute:

"You hug most mighty clus, that am er fact. Er leetle too much so fer friendship, and I rayther reckon once will do me fer er lifetime. No, I shan't fergit yer—shall remember yer at least until I git short of meat and want er roast or er steak."

A few moments given to rest, and he dodged between the watching animals, and was about to pass out when the hissing of the snakes (that had been aroused by the noise) caught his ear, and he stopped, listened and gave vent to his surmises:

"Here's more deviltry. But the old humbug knows what he am erbout, and keeps a supply of ash leaves on hand. Perhaps I'll come and see ye ag'in, ladies and gentlemen," making a bow in the direction of the den, "but I hain't got time now—have rayther pressin' business on hand." And he went out and carefully closed the opening to the cave in the same manner as he had found it.

And as he dared not venture near the wigwams until night came, he crawled into a neighboring thicket through which the trail to a spring passed, and covering himself with brush and leaves, waited very anxiously for the darkness.

Very frequently the sound of voices reached his ears, and he learned enough to satisfy him of the treachery of Parsons, and swore a deep oath that the scoundrel should suffer for his villainy.

Satisfied that no actual harm had come to either of the prisoners, this greatly relieved his mind, and gave him patience to wait until the hour came when he could continue his scout.

It came at last, and fortunately the night was dark and stormy. Almost with the going down of the sun the clouds had begun to gather, the wind to blow and the rain to fall, and, knowing that the Indians would not long remain from under shelter, he watched yet a little and then drew more

DEAR.

An hour passed. Then some brute of an Indian, who had managed to conceal a portion of the fire-water that had been taken from the wagons of the emigrants, came staggering along and fell over him—saw him, and drawing his knife attacked and at the same time endeavored to give the alarm.

The situation of the scout became desperate. If the noise reached the wigwams—if the warriors learned that a white man was skulking so near, there would be no possibility of escape, and if he attempted to strangle the Indian his knife would not be idle. Indeed, he had already been slightly wounded.

But there was no time for thought. With a mighty blow he felled his assailant to the earth, and before he could recover sprung upon him, falling so that his knees struck full upon his breast and completely taking away his breath. That accomplished, the rest was easy. He immediately obtained possession of the knife that had been aimed against his own life, buried it in the heart of the Indian, left it sticking there, and, finding that he was quivering in death, coolly turned him upon his face, arranged him so that it would appear as if his life had been accidentally taken, and retreated to the opposite side of the village.

The temptation was very strong to supply himself with weapons, but he could only gratify it at the expense of the danger of detection, and was forced to wait a better opportunity.

Driven by the storm, the Indians left the camp-fires early, save the few who were detailed to watch the male prisoner—the female one being secured by the attendance of squaws—so that, with the exception of numerous dogs, the coast was clear, and the scout no longer hesitated to enter the village, though his movements were of the most crafty kind.

Fortune was in his favor, for, even as he came near where the physician was confined, the discovery of the dead Indian was made, and the guards rushed thither—at least he fancied so—and was about to enter the wigwam, when two of them, who had been concealed, sprung upon him, and a desperate struggle ensued. And very hard would it have been for him had he not been fertile in expedients. Shaking loose, he dodged between the legs of the foremost and threw him like

a bombshell into the face of the other, darted to the nearest fire, caught a handful of blazing brands, and whirled them, as he ran, into the wigwams, causing screams and dismay, and forcing the majority to stop and put out the flames.

Still a few swift-footed ones followed ; the race was rapid, and, to the scout at least, over unknown ground. But on he dashed until his progress was suddenly stopped. A wall of rock rose in his path—the fierce cries of the savages were ringing in his ears like a death-knell—there was not a single instant for delay. He gave one swift glance and boldly leaped. At some distance below he had seen a tree, and calculated to alight in its branches, trusting to luck for what should follow. He did so, but luck was against him. The impetus was too great—he whirled entirely over—caught his foot in the forks and hung suspended between heaven and earth, without the possibility of release.

The Indians flung over torches and saw his desperate situation—some watched till the light, saw him still hanging there, and foul birds fluttering around and picking at him—knew he was dead and carried the good news to the village.

CHAPTER VII.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER.

THE old Medicine of the Sioux, when he came to reflect upon the manner in which the prisoner had repeatedly untied himself, was mystified, and though he determined to have no rival yet he believed he might learn some things he could turn to account before the white man was put to death by holding out false ideas of safety and life. To that end he had the prisoner brought to his wigwam, and to his great joy he found his chest there and uninjured.

“Is the pale-face a medicine?” asked the red one.

“A little,” was the cautious reply.

“And the spirits taught him to untie ropes and set himself free?”

"Yes."

"Do they whisper other things in his ears?"

"Many."

"Will he tell them to his red brother?"

"They are the gift of the great Manitou, the same as in life."

"The life of the pale-face is in the hands of the Medicine of the Sioux. One word from his lips, and death would follow—another and the path would be open for him to return to his people. Which shall it be? What would the pale-face give for freedom?"

"Very much."

"Will he teach the wonders that were whispered to him by the lips of the departed and the unseen voices of the winds?"

"What he may he will tell."

"It is well. The ears of the red-man are open. He will drink in the words as the dry ground the warm spring rains. Let the fetters be taken from his tongue."

"First he must go and bring the skull of one who has long slumbered in death. It is the only means by which the secrets of the grave and the other world can be told."

"My brother, for he shall be as a brother to me, will wait?"

"As he now is, even so shall he be found."

With his greatest speed the old trickster departed, and returned after the lapse of a few minutes with the desired article. But, long before, the white man had opened the coveted chest and secured several small bottles and other things about him—things valuable in chemistry and scientific experiments, but far beyond the comprehension of the nomadic children of the wilderness. Time also had been given him to somewhat arrange the plan he intended to follow, and when the Indian entered with the grinning skull, he held it for a few moments, then placed it at the further end of the wigwam, and drew the curtains so as to secure almost total darkness.

"Now," he continued, "let the Medicine of the Sioux look and ask what he would know."

The Indian turned his eyes upon the skull and shrunk back with a groan of horror and intense alarm—shrunk back, and had not the white man held him, would have fled shrieking,

for never had his superstitious mind dreamed of any thing one half as horrible.

Around the fleshless lips—from the long, yellow, rattling teeth—from the cavernous sockets of the eyes—dropping from the threads of hair that still clung to the moldering bone, pale blue flames appeared to creep and dance and drip, and sulphurous fumes to fill the air! And even as he gazed in terror, out from the hollow skull resounded the words in echo to those of the white man:

“Let the Medicine speak.”

The result would have been just the same if a stone had been commanded to give utterance to words, for the trickster was beaten, awed, incapable of either motion or sound. He could not do any thing more than gasp.

The affrighted victim motioned to his companion to do so for him, and the physician asked:

“What would the dead?”

“In the dark caverns of the earth where the worm crawls, and the spotted toad breeds, where bones molder, and the scaly serpent distills poison—in the far-away country of souls the wish of the red-man was heard, and we have come at his bidding. Let him answer!” came in still more startling tones from within the flaming skull.

“You must answer,” whispered the doctor. “Must ask what you wish to know.”

Still the old man was dumb—sat with open mouth and staring eyes, shivering in every limb and vainly endeavoring to command himself.

“Will you not speak?” questioned the voice. “Then pale-face come hither.”

Obeys the red-man could not, and the white one stepped forward, raised the skull, and after holding it for a moment, held it toward the Medicine, who saw that the unnatural light had faded away, but reeled back again as from the fleshless lips came the words:

“Coward, you have lost the opportunity to learn wisdom. Take me back and bury me. Never again will I come at your bidding. But remember this, and if you dare to disobey me I will come in the red forked lightning and earth-rocking thunder—remember, the pale-face must be free.”

The Medicine bowed his head, took with trembling hands the ghastly skull that was held toward him, and with all possible speed restored it to the earth. But as soon as relieved from what he believed to be great danger, the humiliation he had passed through in the presence of the prisoner awoke all his enmity against him, and stopping upon his way he urged the chiefs to immediately put him to torture.

To that they were more than willing, and as the doctor issued from the wigwam where he had been amusing himself at the expense of the old Medicine, he was seized, dragged forward and bound to a post of torture. But he had no intention to give up life without a struggle, and the articles he had taken from his chest having prepared him in a great measure, he believed he could so awe them that no one would dare to lay violent hands upon him, or at least so lengthen the time that the scout would be able to come to his relief and eventually save him.

Acting upon this plan he watched his opportunity, and, with little difficulty, loosened his bonds so that he could throw them off at any time, and waited until the fagots were piled around him ready for the lighting. And, even as the grim old Medicine gave orders for the consummation of his wishes, the same voice that he had heard in the wigwam came once more to his ears as if from the bowels of the earth, and made him tremble again.

"Has the Medicine of the Sioux forgotten," it said, "that I commanded him to let the prisoner go free?"

"Such is my orders," replied the red liar, shrinking back out of the circle, though secretly motioning that the torture should continue.

"Then why is it not done?" questioned the voice, and its deep tones startled even the most hardy of the warriors, while the squaws fled screaming away.

"Ask of the chiefs. I—I have nothing to do with it."

"Beware! If any harm should come to him, my wrath would fall upon you as it never has done before."

There was a brief council, and then the great war-chief of the nation took command, and having heard a garbled story from the Medicine of what had transpired, and seeing nothing in it to excite particular terror, especially as the old

humbug had intimated that the voice was his own work, he stepped forward, and striking his broad hand upon his breast in defiance, exclaimed :

"The great Manitou is ever the friend of the red-man, and when a pale-face dies his laughter can be heard shaking the hills. It is no good spirit that would have him go free, but an evil one that wishes harm to the Sioux."

The speech was received with applause, and those who had trembled saw in it a solution of the difficulty and became tenfold as anxious for the torture to begin. But, before the fiendish work could be commenced, the voice was heard again in contradiction :

"The words of the chief are false. His tongue is traveling a crooked trail. It is the good spirit—the friend of the nation that speaks. He would save them from lightning and tempest, the ice and snow, from famine and the black death."

"Then he can save the pale-face as well !" was the sneering reply.

"He can."

"Let him release him."

"It is done !"

"And save him from fire ?"

"Fire can not harm him."

"That shall be seen."

A dozen brands were hauled into the pile that had been cast around the prisoner, but, before the inflammable material could ignite, he kicked them aside and walked forth unharmed !

"What said the Great Spirit ?" he asked of the wondering savages. "Was it not that no bands could ever fetter him ?"

"But," grunted the chief, "fire would have burned had he not got out of the way."

"No more than ice would have done. See !"

He stepped back to where the flames were now burning rapidly, picked up the most intense coals, held them in his naked hands until they went out, and then procured others and tossed them into his mouth, and chewed them down with as much ease as if they had been pleasant food.

"What do you think now ?" he asked.

What could they think? They knew that fire sorely burned their own flesh, and why should it not his? Still they urged each other on—whispered of trickery, and relying upon the supposed supernatural power of the Medicine, demanded that he should exercise his enchantments, and try if he could not light a fire that would burn the white devil, as it was beginning to be believed he in reality was.

“Will the Medicine dare disobey my commands?” thundered the mysterious voice.

He most certainly would not, had he not been so well backed up and literally driven forward, and was about to raise a burning brand to hurl into the face of the prisoner, when he stepped directly in front of him and asked:

“Will the great Medicine of the red-man show me the arm he would dare to raise contrary to the will of the Manitou?”

Scarcely knowing what he did, the wrinkled, skinny arm was thrust out, and the prisoner looked at it attentively—made a few mysterious passes over it and retreated. But even as he did so, the awful voice, coming from whence no one could tell, was heard yet again:

“Now let him light a fire around the pale-face, if he can.”

That was impossible. The hitherto supple arm, that had ever worked the diabolical will of the owner, was completely paralyzed—had become as iron. He had no more power to bend it than if it belonged to another man thousands of miles away. And thus he stood until the pale-faced man took pity upon him, released him, and hoped he had made a friend.

Though this was not the case—never could be—yet he had completely subdued him, and the warriors gathered in groups, wondering what kind of a man this could be who handled living fire as if it had been cold clay. And very long would have been their council had not the renegade Parsons obtained means to summon the chief privately to him, and explain, as far as he was able, the mysteries that had transpired—that such things were not uncommon among the white men—that he had seen many do the same—that he was simply cheating them—had no more power than any other man, and that the voice they had heard was not that of any spirit, but simply a gift of nature that enabled him to disguise his own, so that it sounded as if coming from a distance.

But if fire would not harm him, what would ? To what torture could they put him that would be equal to it, and how could they secure him beyond the possibility of escape, when he could untie knots as rapidly as they fastened them ?

The renegade, prompted by his master, the devil, was equal to the occasion—soon settled the difficulty, and the prisoner was led—driven on by sharp knives and spears to a distance from the village into a deep valley, whose huge walls of rock arose abruptly upon either side.

It was a dismal place as could be conceived—enough to make a man shudder of itself, but the physician did still more so when he saw a man swinging between heaven and earth, suspended by one foot, head downward, with hundreds of foul birds pecking at and no doubt tearing his eyes out.

“ Thus perish the enemies of the Sioux,” said the old Medicine, triumphantly.

“ Great heaven ! is it—can it be the scout ?” gasped the prisoner, who knew far better than any one not of his profession, how the blood would settle into the head and a most slow and horrible death follow.

“ It is the dog of a pale-face !” was the savage response. “ He thought to escape from the red-man, but the great Manitou brought swift destruction.”

“ May the fall have instantly deprived him of life !”

It was the only and best wish the prisoner could breathe for one in so desperate a situation, but to increase his mental agony and without knowing any thing of the matter, the Medicine replied :

“ While he was yet alive, he was devoured piecemeal by buzzards and crows—is yet alive, see.”

The prisoner strained his eyes and was certain he could see the arms uplifted as of one struggling in pain, and it made his very flesh creep to think of such a death. But the Medicine quickly recalled him to a sense of his own situation by saying :

“ The torture of the pale-face will be no better. He will wish for death for hours and days before it comes—will not even have carrion birds to help bring it, and though wolves will howl around and serpents hiss, they will not come near enough to destroy, beg as he may the Manitou for them to do so.”

But there was a single morsel of comfort—a single ray of sunshine amid all the darkness. His darling Olive was spared the pain of knowing his fate. Her sufferings, heaven be thanked, were ended. She could never be tortured more, in mind or body, and would be standing a bright-winged angel, to welcome him to the shining shore.

But the last drop of agony was quickly distilled into his cup of life. Dragged along still deeper into the noisome valley, a cavern was reached, and even as he was about to enter it he saw the renegade seated at a little distance holding his loved one in his arms and forcing her to submit to his hateful caresses.

To mourn her as dead would have been heaven when compared to this, and the fancied torture of hell could not, he believed, be more an incarnation of suffering. The cries of the wretched girl came to his ears, mingled with the hoarse, triumphant laugh of the renegade, and he struggled like a madman to get free—struggled until the leathern thongs cut deeply into his flesh and the blood started from beneath them.

But it was useless. His every effort was pleasure to the savages—his curses music to their ears. Yet, regardless of what terrors were in store for him, he shouted forth his never-dying love as he was hurried into the cavern and flung rudely upon the stone floor a helpless prisoner, and yet comparatively at liberty to what he soon would be.

The heart-wrecked girl had fainted. The swift-coming death of her lover, and the horror of her own fate, was far too much. But with fiendish malice, the black-hearted white man carried her along until he stood by the side of the prisoner, and kissing the pure, pale lips—contaminating them with his touch, hurled into the shrinking ears:

“Your wife, that was to be, will now be mine! May the thought of it make your dying moments supremely happy. Ha! ha! how very happy! Think of her as being mine alone while lying here in the darkness and slowly starving—dying of thirst, with cool water trickling down within reach of your hand, and yet unable to get a single drop. Oh! how I envy you the pleasure!”

“Devil!” burst from the lips of the physician, and then, as if sorry that he had been betrayed into saying even

much, he resolutely closed them, and nothing could induce him to open them again.

It was in vain the brute taunted him both by words and actions. The blood surged from his heart as if it would burst through every vein, and it would have been mercy had it done so, and at once put an end to his unequalled suffering. But for an hour he was forced to endure. Then the Indians became impatient, and, dropping the girl heavily, the renegade assisted them in placing the fettered form of the prisoner and piling stones around and upon him, so as to prevent movement.

Then the entrance was walled up with massive rocks, and the prisoner left to darkness and the slow, accumulated, never-surpassed horrors of hunger and thirst !

CHAPTER VIII.

MUCK-A-KEE.

MUCH as all had appeared to give way to the white man, in the possession of his destined bride, yet there was at least one of the red-men who looked upon him with angry eyes and her with loving ones, and who was determined that she should fill his wigwam and minister to his comfort.

Muck-a kee, or the Bull-frog—a brave of the most undoubted courage and cunning, but brutally savage disposition, had been inflamed with her rare beauty from the moment his eyes had rested upon her, and he had marked her for his own. But he was too wise to assert his preference as long as the white man was held in so much favor.

With envious eyes he had marked the scene in the cavern, and with envious ears had heard that, as soon as she was sufficiently recovered, she would be given to his rival. This he swore by the Manitou should never be done.

To accomplish his ends, he enlisted the old squaws who

had guard over her by means of presents, and the very night she was to have been made a wife, the girl was missing, and not a soul could be found who could, or would, give the slightest information concerning it.

The guardian squaws declared that it must have been the work of spirits—that even while their eyes were fastened upon her they heard a terrible voice calling her by name, and that she melted away into air—passed through their fingers like smoke when they attempted to hold her, and that then they were struck down and blinded as if by lightning.

The rabble believed the story—the chiefs cared nothing about her so long as she was not destined to torture—the Medicine was trying to recover his lost ground, and in fact no one but Parsons appeared to take the slightest interest in her fate. He was angry without measure, and did every thing in his power to find some clue to her whereabouts, for he knew she could only have been taken away by mortal hands. But he searched in vain. She was as securely hidden from him as if already in her grave and her fair form ashes.

The abductor had been crafty. There was no impress of her little foot upon the ground—nothing by which she could be traced. And as it had been in fact, even so had she been led to believe the purpose. Taking the place of and disguised as one of the squaws, the Indian had filled her half-distracted brain with lies—made her believe that he was the friend of the white man—intended to release her lover, and that he wished her to come and meet him. At another time she might have doubted. But now any thing that promised to free her from Parsons was eagerly snatched at, and the wily warrior carried his end with far less difficulty than he had imagined, and while the village was locked in slumber Olive stole out like a shadow, met him beyond the limits of the wigwams, submitted to be lifted in his brawny arms and carried along the bed of a creek, whose water obliterated every trace, then mounted, he riding behind, and borne swiftly to a considerable distance—where she knew not—scarcely cared, so long as it was beyond the power of the black-souled renegade.

Before daylight they had reached the top of a mountain and found a newly erected wigwam, with another standing

near that showed the marks of many a storm. The former was to be her home for a time, and she saw that it had been fitted up with some effort at comfort, for it was covered with double skins and carpeted with them.

"This," said the warrior, craftily playing the part of friend and taking every possible means to gain her good-will, "is your resting place. Here you will be in the most perfect safety."

"But alone! Alone in this horrible wilderness," she gasped, trembling in every limb at the bare thought of what dangers would surround her.

"No. In the other wigwam is an old squaw who will protect and provide for you. She is very old and crippled, and sometimes not in her right mind."

"A mad-woman my sole companion!"

"She is perfectly harmless."

"And him I love?" she questioned, with her entire soul going out to the physician in his living tomb.

"Is safe, and shall soon be relieved."

"How well you talk my language."

"Muck-a-kee has been often among them, and is their friend. He will save the pale-face."

"And give him back unharmed to me? Oh! joy, joy!"

The face of the Indian darkened for a moment, and his hand sought his knife, but he had too much self-command to permit her to fathom his designs, and after turning away as if to look out, he continued:

"The heart of Muck-a-kee will be glad when the White Lily is again in the arms of the brave she loves. Her skin is as the dawn of a summer morning, her hair soft as the silk of the maize, and her eyes like the stars shinning in the still water."

"And," resumed the girl, without taking the least notice of his compliments, "there will be no danger in our being followed and discovered?"

"By the one of her own race, whose heart is like that of the black snake?"

"Yes."

"When he can follow the trail of the swift-winged swallow, then he can find ours."

"That is good news. When shall he who is confined in the rocks be released?"

"As soon as the red warrior can do so without being detected. But the White Lily need not mourn. No danger can come to him, and it will be many hours before he will even suffer hunger. Let her rest in peace, and no tears stain her bright eyes."

"You are very good. How shall I ever repay you?" and she pressed his hand warmly, and looked up thankfully into his eyes.

The action still more fired his blood, and it was with the greatest difficulty that he could resist the temptation to clasp her in his arms. But the time was not yet ripe for such an action, and forced to resist he turned away and called in a loud voice:

"Metiz."

After waiting for a few moments he repeated the name even yet more boisterously, and at the same time explained to the anxious girl that "Metiz" in the language of the pale-face was "Thin Stick," but that when she had occasion to address the squaw who was to guard her, she had better use the Sioux word.

Still the old woman came not, and after repeated efforts to summon her he went out grumbling—returning dragging her along, and it required a great effort for Olive to keep from screaming, so hideous was she.

How old she was no one could have determined within a score of years. Her yet plentiful hair was white as snow, as were brows and lashes, and the long growth upon the upper lip, but her eyes were black and sparkling as anthracite—looked more like the serpent's when in its deadly coil than any thing human.

She had once been tall, but her form was now nearly doubled by years and pain, though when aroused she could rise to her full height, and her broad shoulders and large arms told of power. Her face was a mass of wrinkles. Her hands were long and the untrimmed nails gave them the appearance of the talons of some great bird. Her figure appeared to be entirely wanting flesh—to be simply a compound of skin, muscles and bones, and as she crept into the wigwam, leaning

upon a huge knotted staff, her fierce manner and coarse voice and restless behavior gave her the appearance of a wild beast.

"Metiz," said the chief, "this is the girl you must guard and feed until I come back."

"Ugh!" was the only reply, but the fiery eyes that were turned upon Olive made her shudder.

"You must take good care of her, do you hear, and you shall have plenty of fire-water and tobacco."

"Ugh!"

She turned away and retreated again to her own wigwam, muttering as she went.

"For the love of heaven do not leave me alone with her," pleaded the girl.

"I will come back—"

"And bring him I love?"

"Yes, as soon as I can. But have no fear; she will do you no harm. She is old and ugly but not dangerous in the least. I must go to see that no one has found our trail."

"And if the black-hearted white man should do so?"

"This!" said the Indian, touching his knife in a manner that could not be misunderstood.

"And the one in the cave? Oh! release him quickly and I will never cease to love you."

"Your lover shall come!"

His reply was peculiarly accented, and could she have read his face, her heart would have sunk within her as deeply as it had ever done before. But it was expressionless to her eyes, and after informing her that he would give the red squaw still stronger directions to keep watch over and be kind to her, he disappeared, leaving her alone with her thoughts.

Soon after she saw him mount and ride down the mountain side, and feeling worn out and in a measure at least safe, she closed the curtains of the wigwam, and nestling among the soft robes, fell asleep.

But what awoke her she could never have told. It was the mysterious influence that often gives warning of coming danger. But awake she did, and that suddenly, and a scream burst from her lips as she saw the old squaw

kneeling by her side, with her face bent closely down to her own.

"Oh! heaven, what do you want?" Olive asked, shivering with undefined alarm.

"The sun is seeking to hide itself behind the western mountains, and the young squaw of the pale-faces must be hungry. Metiz has brought her food and drink."

She saw that the eyes of the hideous Indian woman were upon her, and, fearing to make her angry, she arose, and by dint of a mighty exertion of will managed to eat.

"When the squaw has lived until every thing upon earth has been dead many, many winters she will not be so dainty," resumed her guardian, with a sneering voice, and instantly dispatched the rest of the provisions very much after the manner of a starving wolf.

"But I was not very hungry," replied Olive. "It was good, very good, and I thank you. Now I will go and take a walk."

"Where would the pale-face go?" was questioned in any thing but a pleasant voice.

"Oh! just to walk around a little. I am tired of being shut up in a wigwam."

"The grave is more narrow and dark."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Olive, beginning to fear again.

"If she walks far she may find out."

"Who would do me harm?"

"The woods are filled with great bears, with snarling wolves, with panthers, and almost every rock is a den of rattlesnakes."

"Good heaven! Yet you live among them?"

"I fear them not—fear nothing—am strong and know how to take care of myself. The pale-face is weak as a little pappoose."

"Will you not go with me?"

"What if I should? Your feet are swift as those of a doe, mine heavy, as if my moccasins were lead. The chief gave her into the keeping of Metiz, and she must stay in the wigwam."

"Must?"

"Ugh."

"Do you mean that I am a prisoner?"

"Until the chief comes back."

"He brought me here to save me for—"

"Himself."

"Oh! heaven, tell me what you mean."

"He will make her his wife—will take her to his wigwam."

"Can it be possible there is such treachery? He told me he was my friend—the friend of the white man."

"Then he lied!" she hissed like an adder. "Lied like the serpent that charms the little sparrow, while guarding its young."

"But you are a woman and can save me," and she flung herself at her feet.

"Woman?" screamed the squaw with a horrible laugh that made the rocks ring. "Metiz a woman! She is a devil, and all the tribe fear her. When you have seen every thing you love—father, mother, sisters, brothers, and husband and children murdered by the pale-face; when your hair has been turned, and you have lived in a howling wilderness alone, for the Manitou only knows how many winters, what will you be then? No, the chief lied! He hates the pale-face, even as I do. But talk not to me of them—let me get out of your sight, or I might be tempted to drive a knife into your heart, even as your people did through those of mine," and she fled muttering the wildest imprecations.

Then the full horror of her situation burst upon the mind of the poor girl, and bowing her head, she wept bitter tears.

But should she wait the return of the brutal Indian? Was not any fate better than to be his wife? She had seen enough to know, in all its brutality, what it meant with one of their own race, and knew it would be infinitely worse with her. Yes, she would run away, and that quickly, forgetting what she had heard about the woods being filled with wild beasts.

She crept to the door of the wigwam and looked out—could see nothing of the fiendish old woman, and stepped to the outer side. But she had hardly passed the threshold before her grim guardian presented herself, and whirling her tomahawk, demanded her purpose.

"I was simply taking the fresh air," replied Olive, to throw her off her guard.

"Then let her lift the skins of the wigwam. To walk from it, will be to walk into her grave."

It would have been useless to attempt to either resist or argue, and the fair prisoner sauntered back, baffled for the time, but without having her purpose changed in the least. She would wait until night came, and then make another effort for freedom, even if she died in doing it. But could she escape she might release her lover, and together they could fly to safety and happiness.

The hours passed—how long and bitter to her, and night came at length. She lay upon the floor of the wigwam with the curtain slightly raised, peering out at the other, and listening, as she had never done before, to every sound. At length she became convinced that the dreadful old crone had gone to rest, and wrapping her garments closely around her, she stepped forth to the long coveted freedom—the blessed boon she had never had the least idea of before. Her heart beat with lightning-like rapidity—she seemed to tread upon air! Then a heavy hand was laid upon her, she was hurled backward, and a croaking, angry voice breathed in her ears:

"The pale-face squaw would run away, and must die!"

"Mercy."

"Did her race show any mercy to mine? Did they spare a single one? My brain is mad with blood. Every thing is red—red!"

Poor Olive! She saw in the semi-light, the flash of a long knife, the gleaming of the terrible eyes, burning with madness—saw the long, skinny arm that was raised to give strength to the blow—exerted all her own. With the power of despair she struggled to her feet, and grappled with the murderess. They fell together. An iron grasp was fastened upon her slender throat, and she knew her last hour had come. But with a mighty effort she tore loose, and disappeared in the darkness down the steep mountain side—fled she knew not whither, with many an arrow whistling over her head.

And soon she would have paused for rest, for she had often fallen and was sorely bruised, had she not fancied that she

heard the tread of a swiftly-ridden horse, and believed the false-hearted Indian was upon her track, or at least soon would be. Nerved by this, she pressed onward, deeper and deeper into the fastness of the forest, tumbling over rocks, tearing her dress and soft flesh upon the sharp thorns, creeping among the tangled roots, with the face scratched by the low-growing branches, and her feet cut, and numbed, and bleeding. Onward till she could do no more, and sunk down as if ready to die.

A low but startling growl aroused her. She looked wildly around, and saw, to her horror, the form of some beast crouching upon a limb above her, ready for its spring—saw the great mouth, the long, sharp teeth, the blood-red tongue, the eyes like balls of fire—knew that a panther had trailed her—would instantly leap upon and tear her to pieces, and with a great cry of agony fell insensible to the ground.

CHAPTER IX.

I-IRON-YAH-TEK-ITA

"It beats human natur', Burning Cloud," said Wash Lawton, the scout, as he lay concealed in a deep crevice of the rocks, craftily covered by bushes and dirt and stones so as to resemble the natural surface of the hill, and at but a little distance from the spot where he had fallen—"it beats human natur' how yer could hev got me out of ther scrape, and it war jest the tightest I war ever in durin' all my days."

"The daughter of the red-man," replied the Indian girl, who was his companion, "has never forgotten his kindness when his pale-faced brother—but not in heart, for one is white as the snow, and the other as black and treacherous as a thunder-cloud—would have buried his tomahawk in her head, and she with one arm broken and useless."

"It was er mean, cowardly trick, that am er fact, but I hain't half as well able to pettect myself as you war. I feel jest as ef I had been run through er boom full of logs in er

spring freshet, and as ef every drop of blood in my carcass had settled inter my brains."

And so indeed he looked. His eyes were still so much bloodshot that the iris could not be distinguished, while the skin of his face was swollen as if blood had been forced through every pore, despite the constant bathing with cool water by the gentle hands of his savior and nurse.

"The pale-face would soon have gone to the land of spirits," she continued, "had he not been released."

"But how did yer manage it? Sartinly yer could never have climbed down ther face of ther rocks."

"A bird could scarcely have found footing."

"Then how in ther name of common sense did yer do it?"

"I-ron-yah-tek-ha (using her uncouth Indian name, though the scout always did the interpretation of "Burning Cloud," or more commonly, "Cloud,") was watching the pale-face who had been kind to her—followed as he ran—saw him when he fell, and as soon as the braves disappeared, she made a strong line of deer-skin, looped it about a tree above, clambered down and drew it after her."

"It was bravely done, Cloud—bravely done."

"Then she fastened him so that he would not fall, cut away the limb that held him like a wolf in a trap, lowered him down and dragged him to this spot, thanking the Manitou that he was not dead."

"But most mighty near to it, I kin tell yer. And I must have had a hard time on it, fer my huntiu'-shirt and leggins am clean tore off."

"They are hanging still in the tree-top," replied the squaw, with a low and musical laugh.

"Hangin' in the tree-top! What in thunder am they thar fer, I'd like ter know?"

"The eyes of the red-man are like those of the lynx, and his cunning that of the serpent."

"Oho!" and the laugh that followed, even though the ever-cautious one of a trapper, made him fairly groan with pain, so sore was he in every muscle. "Ha! ha! I see it all now. Yer knew ef yer didn't fool 'em in that manner, they would bin erlookin' eround ter see what had become of me, fer it wasn't likely I'd rot and fall ter pieces so soon."

The girl nodded, and the smile upon her face, in connection with her kindness, made her very beautiful, and he continued:

"So yer jest took ther buck-skins and stuffed them and fixed on ther cap and hung them up, and it was so fa'r that even ther sharp eyes of ther warriors couldn't tell whether it was er dead man or not."

"And snared a rabbit and placed it where the head of the pale-face should have been."

"What in thunderation was that fer?"

The rest he could see through plainly, but that troubled him—was a puzzle he could not understand, experienced as he was in all manner of woodland subterfuges.

"That the birds would gather around and pick at it."

"As they would have done at my poor head and eyes ef they had bin thar! Give me a woman fer cuanin, arter all!" and he rolled backward and forward over the soft, thick bed she had prepared, in the excess of his merriment at the manner in which the crafty warriors had been deceived.

"The red-men knew well what would follow if the pale-face had remained," she answered, with a gratified look at his praises, and proceeded to describe more at length the difficulties she had encountered.

"Yes, yer must have had a hard time on it gittin' me heah. I ain't none of ther lightest or you none ther strongest, and you couldn't well have carried me."

"The daughter of the red-man raised the body in her arms, and though his moccasins left a trail she easily covered it up."

"And yer took all this trouble jest because I happened tew do what any good man would have done?"

"The Sioux never forget."

If he had not been so entirely intent upon his own thoughts and the skill she had displayed, he would have noticed her softly-beaming eyes, and that the hot blood surged up from her heart and flushed even the olive of her cheeks—that his stalwart frame and kindness had awakened the most powerful passion in her heart, notwithstanding,

"She had struggled hard and long
Against her love, and reasoned with her heart,
As simple Indian maiden might."

But he was not yet in a situation—was far too much shaken to give a single thought to any thing but himself and his wonderful escape, and went recklessly on.

"I know, Cloud, yer people remember er good deed as well as er bad one, and never forgit revenge, and I only hope I kin make it even with yer some time, and I will ef I live."

"The pale-face is safe from the dark Manitou of death."

"Yes, for the present, I reckon, though I wouldn't be good fer much in a foot-race or a fight."

"There are barks and roots in the forest that will make him well again."

"The sooner the better."

"I will go gather and steep them, for I dare not build a fire here."

"Yer right, Cloud. Thar'll be sharp eyes on ther valley fer er long time and any thin' out of ther common would draw er crowd of warriors. But will yer not be in danger yerself?"

"I would do much more for the pale chief," she replied, in a trembling voice, and quickly left his side that her feelings might not betray her.

The time she was away appeared very long to the scout, and when she returned he saw from her agitated manner that something uncommon had happened, and taking her hand kindly, he asked, with far more of tenderness than he was aware of:

"What's ther matter, Cloud? Has anybody bin erbusin' yer? Ef so, jest tell me and when I git on my feet ag'in I'll thresh ther ground with him."

"A young brave—"

"Ha! er lover!" he interrupted, and the sound of the word though uttered by his own lips grated harshly upon his ears.

"A young brave sought her side as the buck does that of the doe and would have remained there."

"Then yer drove him erway, Cloud?"

"Had it not been for the pale chief I would have done so forever."

"What had I tew do with it?"

"If I had made him an enemy he might have followed and found you."

"That's jest as true as gospil and I hain't in no condition tew take my own part ner yours nuther, jest now."

"I wear a knife."

"Yes, and hain't got no use of but one arm. But what did ther painted raskil want?"

She busied herself with bathing his swollen neck, kept her face bowed and pretended not to hear, and he continued:

"War he er lover, Cloud?"

"He has often told me he loved me," she responded in a low voice, being thus compelled to answer.

"And don't yer love him? Ef he am er likely young feller, and will git ter be er warrior some day, I don't see why you shouldn't do so."

"She loves but one."

"Wal," he replied, with a laugh, and not even then penetrating through her disguise, "I never knew er woman ter take er likin' ter two men at the same time."

"Let the pale-face drink and try to sleep," she said. "The child of the red-man will stay and watch him as long as she dares. Then she will pray the Great Spirit to keep guard over him until she comes and brings him food in the morning."

"Yes. I do feel kinder sleepy, but I know I hain't more'n half thanked yer fer what yer've done. Howsomever I will do so when I get better. But can't yer git me er drink of cool water fust? I'm dry as er stump that has been dead fer forty years."

"The spring is not distant," she replied, going quickly to comply with the request.

"I can't understand the actions of ther red-skinned critter at all," he muttered to himself under his breath. "She am ther pootiest squaw I ever sot my eyes on, and has saved my life and bin very good ter me. I wonder ef she kin have taken er fancy ter me? Here she comes ergin, and ef I hain't er fool, I'll find out what it all means, and ef she would consent ter take pot-luck with er poor trapper like me, I shan't be backward, fer ter tell ther truth I never saw er woman I sot so much store by."

After the water had been drank and a brief conversation followed, the scout stretched himself out for slumber, her last words being :

"I will watch until the pale chief sleeps soundly. Then I will go to my wigwam, for I must not be missed from there. Should he wake he must drink of this (pointing to a muckuc of birch bark) and when she comes again all pain will have left him and he will be fit to take the trail."

"Wag Cloud, yer ther dearest and best Medicine I ever knew. Good-night."

She sat motionless for a long time, watching his face as intently as a fond mother might have done a child. Then his heavy and regular breathing convinced her that he was asleep. But she must be certain beyond the shadow of a doubt before she could give way to the promptings of her heart, and lighting a little strip of inflammable bark she held it close to his eyes. No flinching of muscles or winking of lids betray consciousness, and bending over him she breathed in the softest of whispers as her lips touched his :

"Ne-ne-moosha, sweetheart, how much I love you!"

"And so do I you, Cloud!" replied the scout, who had been watching her—"playin' 'possum," as he would have said—as he sprung up suddenly and clasped her in his arms and returned her caresses with usurious interest.

She tried to escape, but could not, had been fairly caught, and yielded gracefully while the hunter continued in his rough but honest and warm, great-hearted way to tell her of his affection.

"I knew I kinder liked yer," he said, as he twined his arm around and drew her close to his side, "ther very fust time I ever sot my eyes on yer, but I didn't know how much on-til I heard yer talkin' erbout ther young brave. Then it all come ter me in er minit. Howsomever, it am all right now, and jest as soon as I kin git out of this ar' infernal scrape we'll travel to whar we kin build er wigwam and live in peace."

"The pale-face is a great chief, brave and handsome," she replied, looking into his face with bashful confusion, though making no effort to conceal either her great admiration or love.

"Wal, I don't know erbout ther handsome part," he replied with a laugh, "but I do know you have become very dear ter me. And do yer love me so much?"

"He has become the Manitou of her heart."

"That's lovin' most mighty well, Clou! Give me ernuther kiss. I hain't had er single one before since my poor mother kissed me, and that's many er long year ergo."

"If any thing should happen to him she would die," she replied, with tears gathering in her eyes as she reluctantly tore herself away and prepared for departure.

But yet she lingered for a long time. She, both of them were learning for the first time what bliss there was in loving, and it was not until after the squaw had soothed her white lover into real slumber that she turned her reluctant feet home. But once having started her speed almost rivaled that of a deer.

Yet broken would have been her slumbers and her dreams far other than the heaven of lovers, could she have been aware that the moment after she had started, a dark, painted form crept out from the concealment of the bushes, where every word must have been audible to him, and took her place by the side of the sleeper.

It was the young brave who had sought to gain her love!

But his face told of another and far more deadly passion now, and more than once his knife was raised to find a bloody sheath. Yet he refrained from striking. His subtly-working brain was devising a far more terrible vengeance—one that would strike terror into the heart of the Burning Cloud as well. And yet the leaving of a scalp so easily to be obtained, and one that would bring him so much of renown, was hard for his nature—the most severe trial of his life thus far.

But might it not be that he could force the squaw to become his wife—or at least bribe her to do so—the bribe being her lover's life?

It was as he conceived a brilliant idea, and drawing back without staining his soul or his hands with murder, he left the sleeper to his rest, and followed the girl to the wigwam—saw her—related what he had seen, and attempted to carry out his plans.

But she laughed at him and his threats, and when he told the story to the warriors, dared him to the proof.

"The morning will decide," he said, sullenly.

And decide it did. The warriors and the spy and the girl went to the spot he designated, and found nothing of any such place of concealment as he had described, but a torrent foaming through the rocky gorge that bore no impress of ever having been in another place since creation!

CHAPTER X.

THE TORTURES OF THE MEDICINE.

With the white Medicine completely in his power and at his mercy, the red one determined to make him reveal every secret charm and mystery—every trick of juggling that he could possibly turn to account to extend his influence over the tribe.

To do this he must be certain that no one should be any the wiser—that there was no spy upon his movements, and so he gave public notice that the Manitou would be very angry with any one who ever visited the vicinity where he was confined.

In this respect at least he was obeyed, for there was no longer any interest taken in his fate, and the more especially as they believed the scout was dead, and the white girl had stolen away, and most likely perished in the wilderness.

With matters thus arranged it was easy for him to carry out his purposes without danger of molestation, and he secretly took his departure for the cavern, removed a sufficiency of the wall to enable him to creep through, replaced it again to baffle any curious eyes, and lighting a taper (formed of wax and bear's grease) took his place by the fettered and helpless prisoner, and began tormenting him, though at first by words.

"How does the pale-faced dog like the prison-house of the red-man?" he questioned, in a sneering voice.

"It is a good place to die as any other," replied the physician, somewhat cheered even by his presence, and resolved to show bravery if he did not feel it, and find out, if possible, what had become of his lost love.

"Would he live?"

"Who would not?"

"What would he give for life and freedom?"

"Any thing."

"Then let him tell how he got clear from the many thongs that were knotted around him."

"Remove the stones and I will show you."

"Is the Medicine a fool?"

"It is the only way I can explain, so that you will understand."

"The tongue of the pale-face is used to traveling a crooked trail, but the snows of many winters have fallen upon the head of the Medicine of the Sioux, and brought wisdom," and then, as a further temptation to the revelation, he continued: "Would he not learn of the squaw whose skin is like the blossom of the prairie rose?"

"I would be willing to die, if I could but know that she had escaped from the power of that black-hearted ruffian."

"If I will tell, will you reveal the secrets by which you make yourself great among your people?"

"Yes, any thing that is in my power."

"She fled in the night, and the pale-face can not find her."

"Heaven be thanked!"

"But neither can the red-man, though they have tracked her as the starving wolf does the wounded and blood-dropping deer."

"Then she must be lost in the wilderness."

"Where the wild beasts roam," answered the red-man, with almost fiendish delight.

It was a terrible consummation of the bright dream of love, and yet, any thing was better than to think of her being the reluctant and agonized wife of the remorseless renegade. Even death was a release from never to be told suffering, and through the profound darkness, there is a very faint hope of escape.

"Now," resumed the old trickster, "let the pale-face tell how he untied himself."

"I can not without showing you."

"And how he made the voice that the red-man took for those of a spirit?"

"It is a gift of nature, improved by practice," and he gave an illustration of the peculiar powers of a ventriloquist.

"And how he made my arm like iron?"

"That, also, is a gift—the exercise of a concentrated will," and he related the manner of mesmerism.

But do what he might he could not illuminate the stolid mind of the Indian—could not produce any tangible illustrations, and consequently could not satisfy him, and his face turned still blacker, and became even more hideous with anger, as he thundered, "The pale-face lies! He will make him tell what he wishes to know. Before he has done with him, he will whine like a whipped dog—cry like a sick pappoose, beg like a coward for his life, and be glad to tell every thing that is concealed within his black heart."

Never was a poor wretch more at the mercy of his torturer. Besides the bonds with which he had been fettered, and which cut deeply into the flesh, his limbs were loaded down with heavy stones, so that while they did not actually crush they yet restricted every movement. Then, too, he was already beginning to suffer from the combined effects of hunger and thirst.

"The pale-face handled and swallowed red-hot coals," said the Medicine, savagely. "Let him keep the fire from burning him now if he can!"

Slowly, and by the exercise of more strength than his withered frame would have been thought to possess, the Indian removed the stones from about his feet and kindled a fire there that would scorch, blister, burn deeply and yet be in no danger of taking life. He was experienced in this kind of torture, and knew well how far it could be carried.

An icy sweat burst over the miserable prisoner—great drops stood upon his brow. His agony was frightful. He could have screamed for pain, and forced his tongue between his teeth to prevent his doing so, though he could not keep the smoking flesh from wincing.

"Will the pale-face confess?" asked the diabolical old torturer, as he held a cup of cold water to the parching lips, and then, as they were strained open to swallow, swiftly removed it again.

"I have told you all I can," gasped the suffering man, adding beneath his breath: "Oh! God, have mercy upon me!"

"It is a lie!"

The tortures were renewed—the fire drawn still a little closer, and to make the horror more intense, the swollen, blistered feet were scarified with the point of a sharp knife and the blood and water spurted forth and hissed upon the glowing coals.

"Will the pale-face tell?"

"I can not—can not, more than I have already done."

He felt as if he would instantly expire. Yet his professional knowledge told him such would not be the case—that human nature could endure such suffering, severe though it was, for hours. And as the old fiend bent over him, with looks of hatred and ferocity lighting up his dark features, he registered the most solemn oath that ever was formed within a human soul, that if he should survive and gain his freedom he would rival him in revenge.

But when to the tortures of fire was added the equally terrible one of water falling drop by drop upon his head, he felt that his agony was fast becoming too great for endurance—every fiber of his frame shuddered, and he knew that he was rapidly becoming insane.

Then he would have bartered every particle of knowledge he possessed for a respite from pain, no matter how brief, and did all that was in his power to tell his tormentor what he was so anxious to know. But it was without avail. The fire still raged, and blistered, and burned—the skin was beginning to crumble away, shriveling up like parchment and gaping cracks appearing in the flesh!

Even the Medicine saw that it would not do to carry it further, and kicking aside the brands he drew some ointment from his pouch, dressed the horribly-burned feet, and with the very refinement of cruelty, said:

"To-morrow all the fire will be removed, and the sores be-

gin to heal, for this salve is famous among the red-men. Then I will come and burn again!"

The poor white man fancied, and a prayer of thankfulness went upward from his heart at the thought, that his torture for the time was ended. But it was not so. It was to be continued in a different manner—one equally difficult to bear, though bringing with it little danger.

Tearing the garments from about his body and as far as he could well do from his limbs, the demon in human shape produced a bag of nettles and began rubbing the exposed flesh, leaving such a fierce, fiery, stinging sensation that even more than fire tended to drive the victim mad.

"Ho! ho!" shouted the Medicine, making the cavern echo with his derisive and joyous laughter. "How do you like this? Where are the spirits now that you boasted you could summon at your pleasure? Why do they not come and save you?"

"Taunt as you may!" replied the prisoner, choking down the great gasps of pain, "but your day will come, and then, God help you!"

"The Manitou of the pale-face is a dog."

There were other and equally bitter tortures floating through the mind of the Medicine, but he was forced to reserve them until another occasion. His pleasure in the suffering of the helpless prisoner was too great to be glutted at once, and so he gave him both food and drink to refresh and sustain him. Besides he believed he would yet accomplish his purpose of extorting the secrets he desired, and would prolong human suffering to any extent to do so.

Again the prisoner was left alone and in the darkness, suffering, almost dying, and even when worn out and he slumbered, his sufferings could only have been equaled by those of the bottomless pit.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RENEGADE.

WITH the peculiar cunning that belongs to such dastardly-minded men, George Parsons watched for some sign of the beautiful Olive, but without success. He could neither find a token or a trace. That she was hidden somewhere in the neighborhood he did not doubt any more than that she had been spirited away by some of the Indians who were jealous of him. But, failing to ascertain any thing, he resolved upon blinding the eyes of the Indians for a time ; so proclaiming his wish to settle among them and become a chief, he boldly began wooing a young squaw for his bride, little thinking that the one whom he had so brutally intended to destroy was keeping an eye upon his movements and silently nursing her revenge.

Yet such was the case. The Burning Cloud had persistently avoided him, or when forced to be seen by him, had been so effectually muffled and disguised that he did not recognize her. In fact he had almost forgotten the episode of their meeting amid the other excitements, and not having seen her was led to believe that she did not belong to that portion of the tribe, and soon gave the matter no further thought.

But she never failed to keep track of all his movements, and as soon as she learned that he was endeavoring to gain the affections of one (who chanced to be a friend and an intimate) of their number, she resolved to ascertain what his intentions really were, for, with a woman's penetration she saw that something was hidden.

First, however, she must take the girl whom he destined to make his wife into her confidence, and obtain from her a pledge of secrecy, as well as to put her upon her guard against a love that could only prove disastrous. This was not difficult. Indian girls love mystery as well as their fairer-skinned sisters, and it was so arranged that the Burning Cloud became an unseen witness of many of their interviews.

The girl played her part well. It was subtle treachery against treachery. She led him on by the arts well known to all women—by a skillful management of sighs and voice and eyes, until he plainly told her of his love, and urged her to consent to immediately become his wife. Then she played the coquette—refused him even a kiss, but, after long pleading, promised to meet him the next evening, when no one could see or hear them, and give him an answer.

The delay chafed, but he was forced to be satisfied, and when the appointed time came, he found the young squaw waiting for him at the trysting, though the spot she had chosen was so dark that he knew not of her presence until she called him by a name given by the tribe—and a very appropriate one it was.

"The eyes of White Wolf are not sharp," she said, with a low laugh at the manner in which he started, "and his heart beats not warm or it would have told him who was near."

"Why, Little Raven," he replied, "it is so dark that I could not see any thing—so dark that I was afraid you would not dare to come."

"What should she fear? Her heart is pure and her trail an open one. She is willing the Great Spirit should see both—should know her every thought."

"Why do you speak so low, and in a changed voice?"

"There is more than one of the braves jealous of White Wolf, and until Little Raven becomes his wife and has found a home in his wigwam, she would not have any one know of their meeting."

"That is well enough. But, come nearer to me. Let me put my arm around you, and give me a kiss."

"Is it thus the white squaws treat their lovers?"

"Certainly."

"The red one keeps her favors for her husband," was the proud response. "He would have the flower before the dew is brushed from it, or not at all."

"That's prudish, Raven. But who is there to see?"

"The stars and the Manitou."

"Pshaw! Your coming to-night tells me that you will be my wife, and why should there any longer be formality between us?"

"Does not the pale-face bring gifts to the wigwam of her he loves?"

"Yes, and you shall have them in plenty after we are married. Then I am going back to my people for a little time, and when I come again you shall have beads and ribbons and every thing you desire."

"Why does he go if he wishes to become a chieftain of the Sioux?"

"To get guns and powder."

"But what will he say when they ask him what has become of the pale squaw who was in his company?" she asked, gently leading him on.

"I don't know; shall have to tell some kind of a story. What do you think has become of her, Little Raven?" and the tone of his voice told her sensitive ear that he was very far from having lost his interest in her.

"The pale-face has hidden her, and will bring her back, when he wills, to his wigwam."

"What, when you are to be my wife?"

"Are the chiefs of the pale-faces so poor that they can not have but one wife? The red warrior has many."

"I hadn't thought of that, but the fact is I don't know where she is, though I have searched far and near, and intend to continue to do so."

"Then you do love her?"

"No; I hate her, and would soon hand her over to the tribe for torture. If you will find her, Raven, I will give you any thing you ask."

"If I should, I would drive a knife through her heart."

"What in the name of heaven would you do that for?" he asked, earnestly, and with far more of feeling than he intended to display.

"So that she could not come between me and the love of White Wolf."

"That would never do. She must not be injured, even in a hair of her head."

She had found out all she desired to know of the state of his heart—knew just as plainly as if he had told her that he still coveted the lovely white girl, and changing the subject, asked:

"Will the pale face take the Raven, after he has made her his wife, with him when he goes to visit his people?"

"That I couldn't do."

"And he will soon come back?"

"Very soon. I may not be gone over a week."

"Will he tell the warriors of his plans?"

"No, why should he?"

"They are to be his brothers."

"Does each tell the other when he starts upon a hunting-trail or for scalps?"

"When there is any great purpose, yes."

"Well, I don't choose to do so. But, Raven, I want you to keep a sharp look-out for the white girl while I am gone. Will you do so?"

"The eyes and ears of the Little Raven will be open."

"And you need not say what I have gone for to any one I shall give out that it is to hunt; that will be enough."

"When will White Wolf start?"

"I don't know. When will you marry me?"

"When you come back, ask me."

"Why not answer it now?"

"Because he might never return, and then the girls of the tribe would point their fingers at her and cry out *shame!*"

"I am certain to come back," and had he finished the sentence as it was in his thoughts it would have been with, "for vengeance upon your cursed race who have robbed me of Olive."

"If so soon, he can wait until then for the Little Raven to fill his wigwam, and he can bring presents to make her gay for her bridal."

That he did not wish the bride to know of his intentions was proof positive to her mind of treachery, and though the conversation drifted into love matters and he protested it in the most ardent fashion, yet she kept him at a distance and would not permit him to enjoy caresses in the slightest degree. But she managed to convince him (though without pledging herself) that she adored him more than all the world—would keep his secrets and be true to him in all respects, and when they separated he believed her heart to be all his own.

There would, however, have been a great revulsion in his feelings if he could have seen how she doubled like a hare upon her trail as soon as his back was turned, and entered the village by another path—how she flung aside her blanket and the face that was revealed was stamped with any thing but tender emotions—was that of the Burning Cloud !

But he met the Little Raven soon afterward, and they had a long and familiar conversation (though without referring to what had already transpired that night), and she managed to deepen still more the impression he had received, and he felt that he was playing the part of a scoundrel. But, the heart of woman was nothing more than a straw, and he cared as little about breaking it.

With all his arrangements perfected, he took his rifle upon the following morning and started out as if for a brief hunt, passing the Little Raven, pausing and bidding her a kind farewell. But he also passed another who knew far more, and whom he did not see.

Burning Cloud was peeping at him through the curtains of her wigwam, and as soon as he had disappeared turned to her brother—a young warrior of very noble face and figure, and whispered :

“ Follow him as the wolf follows the wounded buffalo, as the eagle does the dove—the panther the young doe. Be ever near him and yet never in sight. Hear every word that issues from his lips but let yours be dumb as death. Be secret as the mole and crafty as the spider. Let your footsteps be as light as the falling snowflake, and your ear as sharp as the stag. Let nothing escape you. More than you dream of hangs upon what you may learn—perhaps even the fate of the whole tribe. If he turns back, bring me the news before he can get half the way. Let nothing stop you, fire or tempest, heat or cold, sunshine or rain, hunger, thirst, sleep, rest, thunder or lightning. But should he not come back,” and her eyes flashed still more vividly and her frame trembled with wild excitement, “ should he attempt to fly like a loon-hearted coward, this !” and she handed him a long knife that had been ground to razor-like sharpness, “ and bring back his scalp or come not at all.”

“ My ears are like the soft earth in the springtime to re-

ceive, and like it when frozen in the winter to retain," he said, and slowly disappeared from the village, as active, crafty and well-prepared a spy as ever followed trail for knowledge or for blood!

For two days and two nights he tracked the white man. Then the trail of the emigrants was reached, and he easily divined that the object of the renegade was to intercept some passing train, and fortune favored him. He saw one toiling along in the distance, knew where it would camp, reached the spot ahead of them, and when Parsons came up was hidden so as to watch all that happened—watch and listen.

Free tongue was given to the conversation, and the spy heard it all. Then, and without waiting for the light, he turned homeward, and scarcely a deer could have traveled more swiftly—traveled without the slightest pause for rest—burst, travel-stained, into the wigwam of his sister even while she was sleeping, and the single word he uttered was the condensation of all he had to tell. It was:

"Naudoway—see!"

CHAPTER XII.

IN THE FOREST.

THE sudden fainting and falling of the wretched night-wandering Olive saved her life.

The panther had been startled by her shrill screams, miscalculated the distance, leaped over her and was instantly engaged in deadly warfare with another of its kind, that had also come upon the same errand—was stealing along like a grim ghost through the bushes, and was hurled to the earth by the one that leaped from the tree.

But the poor girl fortunately knew nothing of the savage duel—heard nothing of the snarling, tearing, ripping—the snapping of jaws—the rending of claws—the terrible howls. All that was spared her, and when she awoke to something of consciousness she crawled in an opposite direction, though

wondering very much as she paused to rest in the sunshine, that streamed through the tree-tops, how her dress should have become so spotted with blood—which she believed came from human veins.

Refreshing herself from a cool spring that trickled out from the mossy interstices of a rock, she endeavored to think of what it was best to do. Of her exact locality she had no conception, but after an hour of reflection she believed she knew the course to the valley, where her lover had been walled in, and following the dictation of her heart, womanlike, rather than her reason, she determined upon the desperate task of **finding and releasing him.**

But how difficult the undertaking she was soon convinced—difficult and dangerous. More than once she fled in alarm from a rustling in the bushes—once she stood almost face to face with a great, gaunt timber-wolf—once she trod upon a shining, scaly serpent, whose horrid hissings rung in her ears for hours afterward, making her very flesh creep.

It was a terribly long, tedious, laborious, foodless day, and when night gathered around she sought and found a large hollow tree, gathered branches, crept within, barricaded it, and, with a fervent prayer to Heaven, was soon lost in the **deepest slumber of all her young lifetime.**

Yet even blessed rest was denied her. Scarcely an hour had passed before she was awakened by something scratching without, and saw two red eyes peering in at her that flashed angry lightnings, while a deep roar told of some wild beast. Then she intuitively knew all that was to come—knew how much she was at the mercy of some savage monster!

She had taken up her quarters in the home of one of the huge bears of the mountains, and it was returning to its **cubs!**

Guided far more by impulse than reason, she grasped one of the largest of the branches and struck the hideous beast in the face, and then, as it drew back in astonishment, she sprung forth screaming, to the full extent of her lungs—sprung forth and ran swiftly away, the bear following, and it would very soon have torn her limb from limb had not the plaintive cries of its cubs recalled it, and with nature triumphing

over passion it returned to the tree, giving her an opportunity to escape.

What should she do? She dared neither to stand still or go on—had lost all her reckoning—knew not in what direction she was going—was fainting from hunger—was powerless to protect herself. But with constant prayer for him she loved as well as her own safety she continued to wander, momentarily expecting to be confronted by some of the monsters of the forest. And so utterly hopeless became her state that she would have gladly gone back to the wigwams of the Indians, foolishly believing that her condition would excite their pity, had she known the way—have gone like a bleeding lamb into the den of wolves.

Slower became her journeying—fainter was her breath drawn. She could scarcely draw one poor bruised foot after the other, and it was evident even to her reeling senses that her end was very near—that she would soon have to perish in the wilderness—die alone without a single soul to pity, or kindly hand to close her eyes, and that her body would become the sport of wolves' whelps and foul carrion birds.

The idea was too horrible to be calmly endured, and a great cry of misery escaped from her fevered lips. She reeled against a tree, grasped it within her arms, and stood motionless as if turned into stone. The greatest horror of her existence had burst suddenly upon her. She saw by the dim light of the early morning that an Indian was coming toward her—knew that he had heard her screaming—knew that it was her fearful enemy, Muck-a-kee!

In an instant he was by her side and his heavy hand was laid upon her shoulder, and his harsh voice hissed into her trembling ears:

"So the pale-face thought to escape and has nearly perished in the wilderness? But she will wander no more. The wings of the dove shall be clipped so that she can not fly, and the limbs of the doe fettered so that she can not run."

"Merciful God, protect me," was all that she could gasp, as she was hurried along with more than brutal rapidity.

"The red-man has been constantly upon her trail," he continued, "since she escaped from the wigwam of old Metiz. He has followed her fast and far. Now she shall never

leave his side again. Where he goes she shall go and he will make her obey."

"Where, oh, where are you going to take me?"

"Far away from even the village of his tribe. There he will keep her until her proud spirit is broken. He will tame her by hunger and thirst, and heavy loads, and the whip, and—"

"Oh, misery!"

"It is the song she will sing until death!"

Striking in a directly opposite direction to that of the encampment of the tribe, he soon emerged from the timber, and much to her comfort, even if not joy, she was lifted upon a horse and carried along until near noon. Then a swift-winged bullet suddenly put a stop to their course. It had pierced the skull of the horse, and he reared and fell backward, carrying his riders to the ground with him, and, as it appeared, crushing the Indian under him and hurling the girl to some distance, where she lay crippled, even if not dead.

Then the renegade Parsons issued from the woods, cautiously approached and crept around to obtain a better view before venturing nearer. But at length he became convinced that the Indian was powerless to do harm.

But, true to his training, the chief had counterfeited death to draw the white man to him, for, save his knife and hatchet, he was weaponless; and the instant the white man came within reach he sprung up and upon him with a yell of delight.

But, if a traitor and black-hearted villain, George Parsons was a good fighter when the test came—was muscular and desperate. He met the red warrior without flinching, and though the heavy buck-skin garments he wore protected him very much, while his antagonist was naked, save the shaggy bear-skin about his loins, yet the battle would have been a long one and doubtful had not his foot caught in a hole in the prairie, causing him to lose his balance and be thrown heavily.

Hurled backward upon the ground, the white man was at the mercy of one who never knew of such a thing, even in name, and who had many motives besides life and gaining the scalp of his enemy for winning the battle.

Quick as thought the Indian was upon the renegade, kneeling upon his arms and rendering them useless, while he felt of the point of his knife with a smile, and then ran his fingers along the ribs to make certain of the locality of the heart. But yet he hesitated to strike, and his face wore the look of the serpent when the bird is completely within its power, and it has only to dart out its forked tongue to bring death.

"Will the pale dog beg for his life?" he asked.

"Never!" was the reply of Parsons, knowing how useless it would be to do so.

"Then he will die!" hissed the Indian, "and with his bleeding scalp Muck-a-kee will deck the squaw of his race as he carries her away to be his wife."

"Devil!"

"The pale face was a fool to think the girl would be his. She was destined from the first for the wigwam of the warrior."

"Oh! had I but known this!"

"It is too late, and he had better sing his death-song."

"Ha! ha! There comes a party of white men and the girl is rushing toward them."

For a single instant the red warrior forgot his cunning. He turned his head and somewhat loosened his hold. Parsons took advantage of it—wormed himself from under and sprung again to his feet. Never was the tide of battle more suddenly changed—never one renewed with more intense fury or more gallantly contested even though in a bad cause.

The knife of the Indian struck upon the hatchet of the white man and was shivered to the hilt. He flung the remnant aside with a curse upon the Manitou, and felt for his tomahawk. In the desperate struggle it had been loosened and fallen to ground, and he was weaponless. With the cry of an enraged beast he closed with his antagonist, fastened his great teeth in his throat and hung on with the tenacity of a bull-dog. But it was his very last battle—his very last struggle.

Once—twice, the long knife of the white-man was driven into his breast and twisted around with devilish malice. Then the set jaws relaxed—the eyes turned in their sockets,

and the powerful chief of the Sioux fell backward to the earth, dead, and without a groan.

Smarting from pain—half-strangled—with the marks of teeth in his throat that he would carry to the grave, Parsons was forced to rest and take care of himself before he could even give a thought to the prize he had battled so desperately and nearly fatally for. But he hastened to tear away a portion of his garments, and having stanchèd the blood, crawled to where she was lying.

She saw him coming and attempted to fly—ran a little distance into the wood and then fell exhausted. Nature had already been too much overtaxed for her to endure more, and unless she could have rest and care, death would certainly follow and that at no great distance.

On gaining possession of Olive, the renegade would have instantly returned and joined his new-made friends the emigrants. But neither the captive nor himself was in a condition to do so and he was forced to remain. Yet scarcely had he fixed a place for a temporary encampment before there appeared before his startled eyes the Indian girl—Little Raven!

"The pale chief has found the squaw with the soft hair and skin like snow," she said, "and is taking her back to the wigwams of the red-man?"

"Yes—yes," he stammered, not daring to deny it.

"He has met a bear in the woods?" she asserted rather than asked.

"Yes," and he willingly enlarged upon the story that would save him from telling the truth.

"The Little Raven will dress his wounds," and having procured soft bark and gum she did so with exceeding skill.

"How came you here?" he asked.

"She was coming to meet her lover. Her heart longed for him as the deer for the salt-lick."

"For the the love of heaven," exclaimed Olive, "save me from this brutal man. He has killed—"

"If the maiden of the white skin would live she must keep her tongue between her teeth," hissed the Indian girl, with a scowling face and half-drawing her knife.

"You are right, Raven," responded the renegade. "She must not speak, for she would utter nothing but lies."

"Has the pale chief visited his people and brought her present?" again questioned Little Raven.

"No. He found this girl and was hastening back to give her up to the tribe."

"And make Raven his wife?"

"Yes."

"Has he seen any thing of Muck-a-kee?"

"No."

"He is telling what is not true," interrupted Olive, "for he killed—"

"Let the pale squaw come again between the Raven and her lover and I will tear out her tongue!" and the knife of the squaw flashed so near her face that Olive shrunk back, covered her face with her hands and remained silent.

But when the squaw had gathered branches and made a shelter for Parsons and one at some distance for the white girl—when she had built a fire, cooked a little venison she had brought with her—had fed both—had steeped some roots and herbs and given the renegade to drink, she came and sat by her female companion with her drawn knife in her hand. Then once more Olive ventured to speak and ask:

"Will you not tell me what is to be done with me?"

"I will kill you as I would the rattlesnake that tried to bite me if you attempt to escape!" was the stern answer.

Another silence of an hour passed. Then the Little Raven arose and noiselessly sought the side of her pretended lover. She bent down so that her face almost touched his and listened long and earnestly, and having satisfied herself that his slumber was no counterfeit one, she returned to Olive, laid down beside her, and whispered:

"Now the pale squaw may talk. The ears of the chief are like those of the deaf adder. Little Raven is her friend. Let her tell all that has happened since she left the wigwams of the red-men."

"I thought you loved that man," replied Olive.

"I hate him, but he must not know it. Let the pale squaw open her heart, and it will be well for her," and she drew her companion to her and left a reassuring kiss upon her lips.

Then the poor prisoner did indeed open her heart at

all. The girl dashed out into the prairie and assured herself that the death of Muck-a-kee was no fable, and was consequently easily convinced of the truth of the rest, and after a little, persuaded Olive to sleep.

"The sun will again be high," she said, "before the eyes of the pale chief are open. The drink that Little Raven gave him will hold him next to death."

"And you will protect me?"

"With my life. But it will not be needed. Let her sleep."

The squaw released her from her warm embrace—drew her blanket over her head, and remained motionless for a long time. Then she cautiously arose, disappeared, and in an hour after was in the wigwam of the Burning Cloud.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SCOUT.

WITH the dawn of light the scout was astir, and began carefully investigating the ground. But he had gone over very little of it when he saw the old Medicine come sauntering along and enter his cave, that was so well guarded by beasts and reptiles. He watched until the old man came out again, trailed him as he visited the walled up spot where the physician was confined, and waited until he returned to the village, and then crawled near and gave vent to his thoughts after his own peculiar manner:

"Here am ernother of ther old devil's dens and I don't like ther looks on it nuther. But I must know all of his run-ways and what he am erbout. Besides, no one must know that I am eround and it may come handy ef I should have ter cut fer my life."

It was a wise though a dangerous resolution, and had not a party of hunters stopped directly in front of it to cook game, the suffering prisoner would have been immediately rescued. That prevented, but still he lingered near—

crawled to the rocks above and watched them closely. It was at too great a distance, however, for him to hear what was being said, and curiosity drew him nearer. But he soon had occasion to regret it, for venturing upon the very verge of the cliff it crumbled beneath his weight and he rolled down like a great ball into their very midst!

The startled Indians fled in every direction, satisfied that it was the ghost of the man they had seen swinging from the tree above, and, taking advantage of their flight, the scout also disappeared, making the woods ring with hideous moans and laughter.

This story he knew would be circulated far and wide and believed by all but the Burning Cloud, and the valley avoided, especially after nightfall, so he prepared a number of rude torches, and having lighted one, he removed a stone, as the Medicine had done, and crawled into the prison-house of the nearly dead physician.

"Great God!" he exclaimed, as the sounds of suffering came to his ears, and he started back with the intention of retreating, for though he had enjoyed the fright of others he was not proof against the power of ghosts himself.

The sounds continued. Low moaning came distinctly, and straining his eyes he could discover nothing but a pile of stones, that so much resembled a grave as to make him shudder. Yes, it must be a ghost that was luring him to destruction, and the fate of the physician hung upon the most slender of threads.

"For the love of heaven," was breathed in a faint and trembling voice, "come and put an end to my wretched life, and I will even forgive all that you have done and pray for you."

"Great thunder and lightning!" exclaimed the scout, even more astonished than he had been before, "who be yer?"

"Oh! Wash—thank God—I am the doctor."

"Ther doctor!"

He could scarcely believe what he had heard. The physician alone and in such a place, and more than all in a tomb of stones! The scout hesitated not a moment, but, kindling a fire sufficient to illuminate the cavern, he then set to work with a will to remove the stones, muttering deep and bitter

curses upon the hand that had placed them there. Then followed the loosening of the bonds, and tears came into his eyes as he saw to what a state the physician had been reduced, and holding him tenderly in his arms he heard his story.

"May ther devil burn and tear him with red-hot pinchers forezer and ever," growled the scout, from between his set teeth. "But, how much you must have suffered!"

"More than tongue can tell. But what of Olive? Is she alive? Is she well?"

"Yes—I believe so. But now, doctor, I must be off. I won't be gone very long and will bring yer somethin' to eat."

"Do not stay away any longer than is necessary."

"Yer kin bet all ther beaver-skins between heah and ther Mississip, I shan't be gone any longer than I kin posserbly help. I don't fancy ther neighborhood jest now any more than yer do."

"Now," muttered the scout, as he crawled forth into the open air again, "ter find ther Cloud."

It had grown very dark and he found his way along with difficulty, but knowing the direction of the village he steadily kept it until he could distinguish the light of the fires and even hear voices. He made his way to the trysting-place in the Indian grave-yard and there awaited.

He had not long to wait, however, for Burning Cloud soon stole out from the wigwams, and when she reached the blazed trees that marked the spot devoted to the dwellings of the dead, she softly called the name of her lover.

He leaped lightly forward, and drawing her to him they sat down and conversed long and earnestly, for each had very much to tell.

Then he accompanied her as near the village as he dared—lingered and caressed her—and at last would have torn himself away and retreated to a more secure place. But, even as he turned around he was confronted by half a dozen warriors who had crept like serpents around, and was instantly pinioned.

But it was joy to him to know that the squaw had escaped, and still more so that she had been mistaken for a man. This their excited conversation among themselves re-

vealed, and when questioned he boldly gave the name of Muck-a-kee!

Dragged into the center of the wigwams he was bound to the post of torture, and great rejoicing at his capture followed. And the very thing he had at first feared came to pass. He was known, and the air rung with the name of "Beaver Tail!"

CHAPTER XIV.

PLOTTING.

"NAUDOWAY--see!" had been the exclamation of the brother of the Burning Cloud when he dashed almost breathless into her wigwam and flung himself panting upon the floor.

She did not question further at the time. The word 'enemy' convinced her, as she had before believed, that the renegade Parsons had proved as treacherous to her nation as he had been to his own, and with the remarkable patience of her race she waited for further revelation, brought water and bathed the feet of the nearly exhausted runner, gave him food and stimulating drinks, and then filled, lighted and handed him a pipe.

"The trail of my brother has been long and swift. He has known neither rest or sleep. Will he tell his sister what he has seen?"

He related the story, taking a long time for what could have been condensed into a few words. He had followed the white man--had seen him camp with a number of his own race--armed men--with plenty of wagons and horses--had told them a false story about his wife having been captured by the red men and that she was destined to die of torture. And, believing this, they had promised to come and help kill the entire tribe and rescue her. But he was to come first--they follow more slowly and wait in ambush until he gave the signal. Then they were to rush forward, pour in their murderous rifle-shots and slaughter indiscriminately men, women and children.

"Is that all?" questioned the girl, trembling with suppressed passion.

"Yes."

"Does any one know of this?"

"No one but you and the Manitou."

"Then keep it hidden within your heart. Keep it until the Burning Cloud tells you to speak, and the dearest wish of your heart shall be gratified."

"Does she know?" he began asking, in confusion.

"She knows that you love the Little Raven, and she shall certainly be yours."

"But the pale-face?"

"The Raven *hates* him," and then, under her breath, "even as I love another."

"My sister will keep her promise?"

"Before the moon of the falling leaf, she shall be singing sweet songs of love in your wigwam, and for your ear alone."

"It is enough. No torture shall cause my lips to be opened to any but you."

He passed out, and as soon as he had disappeared, the squaw took from her neck the richest string of wampum she possessed. She had destined it to be the brightest ornament at her own bridal. It was one she had woven for that express purpose. Muffling it in her blanket, she walked slowly to the home of the Little Raven, and there being no one else in the wigwam, she laid it in the lap of her friend, and said, in a mysterious whisper: "This from the Young Bear!"

The eyes of the Raven flashed with as much delight as surprise. Among all the braves she would have chosen the brother of the Burning Cloud for a lover. She turned the trinket over and over, and the visitor fancied at first it would be rejected; but when she saw it pressed warmly to her lips, and placed next to her heart, she was satisfied, and boldly proclaimed the secret object of her mission.

"The false-hearted pale-faced lover of the Raven is coming back to croak into her ears his lying words. She must meet him, pretend still to love him, lure him on, see that he does not turn aside from the trail, and let the Burning Cloud know all he says and does. Then she will see that no other eyes than hers look into the heart of the Young Bear, and that

he sings into no other ears than hers. He will yet be a great chief, and his name be sung in the councils of the nation."

Wild with delight at the prospect, the young and passion-swayed squaw was ready to promise any thing, and, after listening to the instructions of her wiser and sharper sister, she at once took the trail, and was seen no more in the village until she came back bursting with the news of the death of Muck-a-kee, and the capture of the white girl by the renegade lover.

The Burning Cloud inquired very minutely into all the particulars, and her face glowed with gratitude and smiles as she learned how fate had favored her.

"But, will the pale-face sleep until the Raven returns again?" she asked.

"He drank deeply of the leaves that take away all feeling," was the reply, "and the sun will be above the tree-tops before his eyes are open again."

"And the squaw with the skin like the snow?"

"She is worn to a shadow, and so tired, her moccasins would grow faint, be the trail ever so short."

"It is well. Let the Raven go sleep."

Left alone, the Burning Cloud pondered long and deeply upon her course. The skein was twisted, and she saw no way of unraveling it. The motives that swayed her were various, and each was strong. Love was the master passion, and if driven to extremity, she would sacrifice every thing to that. But revenge upon the renegade was burning strongly within her soul, and longed to be satisfied with blood. As for the beautiful Olive, gratitude to the physician would do very much for him, but yet she had no very strongly marked interest in her fate, save that she would keep her from torture.

The web was indeed strangely interwoven with bright and dark threads, and she knew not which way to turn to clear the meshes to her satisfaction. Had she known of the fate of the scout—as she did subsequently—all would have been plain. Now she was groping in the dark. But she had to decide quickly, and after all the time that could be possibly given to thought she took to the forest, trusting to chance.

Midnight had long since faded into the small hours, and

knowing that it would require all of her exertions to reach the spot—to which she had been directed by the Little Raven—before the dawn, she ran as rapidly as her strength would permit. Her keen eyes, trained to the darkness, enabled her to find the way when another would have been at fault, and she was rapidly putting the miles behind her when she came to a little spring that bubbled forth in the center of a dense thicket, and paused to quench her thirst and obtain a little rest. But even as she did so she became aware that something was crashing along behind her and—it might be man or beast—she drew back, hoping to escape unnoticed.

Vain hope! A black figure almost instantly stopped by her side, and an angry voice hissed into her ears—a voice that she knew but too well:

“So you have come to meet your pale-face lover?”

“The trail is open and my foot is free,” she replied. “Who dare stop me?”

“I dare.”

“By what right?”

“Though you have refused to be my wife yet the honor of the tribe is mine, and you shall not disgrace it.”

“Honor?” and she started as if serpent-stung.

“Ay, honor,” he replied, knowing full well that the word would reach her heart more painfully than a knife would have done. “The words of the pale-face are ever false. They whisper lies into the ears of the red-men—they trail them on to shame, and when they are asked for the father of their children they can only bow their heads into the dust.”

“Burning Cloud is the daughter of a great chief,” she answered, drawing herself up proudly. “He who couples her name with disgrace must beware!” and she half-drew her knife.

He knew as well as she did her pride of birth, and was determined to sting her upon the most tender point.

“The daughter of a chief when she stoops to love an enemy is worse than any other.”

“Who says I have done so?”

“The whole tribe.”

"Then some serpent has hissed the venom in their but too willing ears."

"It is the scout, Beaver Tail, though he stole the name like a thieving dog, that she loves."

"Well?"

"He has a wife in every tribe."

"It is false as the heart of the Wahkan Shecha."

"The Evil Spirit has poisoned her ears so that she can not tell the straight trail from the crooked one."

"Who says he has a wife in every tribe?" she questioned, fiercely.

"And when sleep has fallen upon the eyes of the red-man she steals out to meet him," he continued, without giving the slightest heed to her question.

"May the Manitou curse and palsy the lips that dare to utter such lies!" and her eyes rayed out dangerous flashings.

"But the warriors will find his trail and then he will die."

"He does not fear to do so."

"Does the Burning Cloud believe the words he whispers in her ears as she lies in his arms and gives her lips to his kisses?"

Every fiber in her frame quivered with passion, and the mastery by which she restrained herself was wonderful. He had heaped upon her the deepest insults she had ever received, but she was determined to bide the time when she could safely repay them with compound interest. Now she had other ends in view — from policy restrained her impetuous temper and he went on:

"The name of the nation is blackened by Burning Cloud."

"Her trail has ever been open."

"It is hidden like that of the mole."

"What would he have her do?"

"Tell the red warriors where the dog of a pale-face is hidden, and give him up to torture."

"Well?"

"Then let her choose a husband of her own people."

"Which means YOU?"

He saw that she had craftily read his purpose even before

he had spoken of it, and went on even more bitterly than before.

"When the children cry for the father they shall never see and beg for bread—"

She spat in his face before he could finish the sentence, so intense was her passion. Her entire soul was up in arms and she hissed back :

"Oh, that I were a man but for a moment that I might cram the foul words down your throat and tear out your lying tongue !"

He laughed tauntingly and she proceeded :

"But, woman as I am, if you dare repeat your words or say aught against my honor I will do my best to brain you on the spot and let out your black blood for the cubs of the wolf to lap and grow fat on."

"She should have been a brave," he sneered.

"I am brave. Stand aside and let me pass."

"Listen to me," and he would have placed his hand upon her arm had she not drawn back. "You shall never be the wife of the pale-face—never see him again. I have long sought for this hour and now you shall swear by the great Manitou to be mine or—"

"When you can make the mountains bow down to the valleys, then I will be your wife, but until then, never."

"Because you love the pale-face?"

"Because I hate you !"

"And you shall have reason. Not far from here is the home of the rattlesnakes. Burning Cloud knows it well. If she will not be my wife I will throw her into their midst and none will ever know of her fate. Thousands of forked tongues will be darted at her—thousands of poisoned fangs be buried in her flesh—thousands of slimy bodies crawl over and around her while still living !"

"I would rather die even thus than become your wife," she cried as she sprung upon him, as suddenly and fiercely as does the mountain-cat upon the one who would rob her of her young.

Taken entirely by surprise the Indian received a severe wound in his shoulder before he could defend himself, and then, his anger at white heat, he grappled with the squaw and

endeavored to master her. It was some time however before he could disarm her, gain possession of her hands and hold them. Then they stood face to face, she completely powerless to either injure or escape.

"Now," he asked, triumphantly, "will she promise to become his wife?"

"Never!"

"Then by the Manitou he will give her to the serpents!"

She shuddered at such a terrible fate and made the most desperate efforts to escape. And he found it most difficult to drag her along. But he succeeded in doing so, inch by inch and foot by foot until at last they stood above the terrible den.

"For the last time," he asked, "will you be my wife?"

What should she answer? She could distinctly hear the clashing of countless rattles—could smell the foul odors—could see the flashing of myriads of lidless eyes—the vibrating of the forked tongues that played like lambent lightning. For all the darkness around she could see the scaly folds of the numberless savage reptiles, that, disturbed by their footsteps, wormed in a living mass like boiling waves breaking upon some rocky beach. Horrible—the like of which earth holds not, and what could she do to avert such a fate?

Renounce the scout—perjure her very soul and become the wife of the one she not only detested but who would even thus dastardly seek to make her his own? The bare thought nerved her to even greater strength, and the battle became fiercer indeed.

Then, when the Indian had succeeded in dragging her to the very verge of the rocky den, a strange light burst suddenly upon their eyes, and he drew her to him, and grasping her throat, almost strangled her in his efforts to keep her silent. A light flashed upon them—the report of a rifle was heard, and, with a mighty groan the treacherous Indian sunk backward to the ground.

A rush through the bushes was heard—a little party of white hunters who were out 'shining deer,' appeared upon the scene, and one exclaimed triumphantly:

"Buck or doe, my boys, it was my shot."

"Great Heaven!" replied the one who carried the torch; "you have killed an Indian!"

"An'Indian? You must be mad."

"Look for yourself."

"God forgive me, it is true. I would have sworn it was the eyes of a deer I shot at."

"You are not the first man who has been deceived in the same way. But, what shall we do with the poor devil? It won't answer to have this known. Hark! What sound is that? A rattlesnake den as I am a sinner! Here is the opening. In with him, men."

It was soon done. Though he was already dead, his body found the same resting place he would have given her living one, and that portion of the party who had promised to assist the renegade Parsons (and were waiting for him) hastily decamped.

Of the Burning Cloud they knew nothing. The instant the iron hand unclasped from her throat she had skulked into the bushes and darted swiftly away.

CHAPTER XV.

HIDDEN WORKINGS.

It was just after daylight when Olive awoke from her chambers, but so busy had her brain been with dreams that it was some little time before she could realize her situation. Then she looked around for the squaw that had promised to be kind to her—saw that she was sitting at a little distance with her blanket drawn over her head, and whispered:

"Little Raven?" after thinking for some time upon the name she had but once heard.

"It is not Little Raven," was answered in a strange voice. "She is in the wigwams of the Sioux. What would the squaw of the pale-faces?"

"Alas! she promised to be my friend."

"And why should I not be?"

"Because all of your people appear to hate me."

"There are good and bad in every nation. One of your own race has been your worst enemy."

"It is too true. Where is he now?"

"Sleeping as the Raven left him."

"Then if you are a friend you will fly with me."

"There is no danger. The snake is scotched. He may turn his fangs upon himself but can bite no one else."

"Who are you?"

"A squaw!"

The word was accented with the most extreme bitterness, and for a moment her eyes flashed with outraged feelings, but seeing that the white girl shrunk from her in fear she smoothed her face, threw back her blanket and drawing nearer to Olive continued:

"The Burning Cloud."

"What is that?"

"My name, in the tongue of the pale-face. She is the friend of Little Raven, and will be yours. But first let me tell what you are longing to hear."

"Of whom?"

"Whose name does her heart whisper the most?"

The girl blushed until her face would have shamed the gorgeous crimson-pink of the prairie, and leaned forward anxiously; but she made no reply, and the young squaw continued:

"It is the Medicine of the pale face, and he is safe."

"Heaven be praised!"

"She can thank the Manitou and the scout. But he has passed through terrible trials."

"Alas! that he also has had to suffer."

"When the black ravens of death were croaking into his ears, and in another hour he would have been wandering on the shores of the dark river that rolls between this and the country of souls, he waded through dangers as through a mighty flood and saved him."

"Tell me, that I may know how to thank him."

"He is himself upon the trail of death!" she replied, very slowly and sorrowfully, and with her eyes overflowing with tears. "But the Burning Cloud will save him or die!"

"You?" asked Olive, in astonishment.

"Can not one with skin like the chestnut, love as well as her who is like the lily?"

"Certainly. Hearts are the same. And you love—"

"I came not to talk of him. The Medicine is his friend, and for *his* sake Burning Cloud would save you. Let her get up and come with me."

"Where?"

"If she doubts, she may follow her own trail. If she trusts, she may come."

Too weak to contend, even if she had been disposed to do so, Olive arose and accompanied her to the spot where the renegade, Parsons, was lying, bound hand and foot, and loudly cursing the one that had made him so.

"Little Raven," he said, as soon as the squaw came in sight, "what does this mean?"

"Let him look again," she replied, calmly, stepping forward, so as to give him a clear view of her face.

"You—I do not know you."

"But I do you," she hissed, rather than spoke.

"No, no. You are mistaken. I have never met you before."

"The pale thief has a bad memory or lies"

"I am certain I am right."

"Listen."

She briefly recounted what had transpired at their first meeting, and he trembled as a coward, as she proceeded:

"More than that, he has lied to the Little Raven, and this poor white squaw. But the dark-mouthed wolves of death are upon his trail."

"You are wrong," he stammered.

"Wrong? Does he know her?" and she dragged the unwilling Olive forward, and turning to her, said, as she held out her knife: "Take this and revenge yourself until your heart is satisfied. Cut away his skin, little by little, until his body looks as if spotted with the small-pox. Do any thing you wish so that you do not take his life. When death comes, it must be at the hands of the red-man."

"I can not—can not!" shrieked the white girl, as she turned away in horror, even at the thought.

"It is well for him," continued the savage-minded squaw, "that our places are not changed. Then, indeed, he might have reason to tremble, for I would have led him such a dance

of death as would have made him crawl like a serpent in the dust, and beg for death. But will you take no revenge upon him?"

"None—none!" still gasped Olive.

"At but a little distance is a wet spot, where the reeds grow tall and the grass rank. There the musketoes and buffalo-gnats and the great green-headed flies breed and swarm. Will she help the Burning Cloud to drag him thither, so that they may sting him like thousands of needles, poison his flesh, and suck his blood, and yet he can not brush them off?"

"No; no!"

"The heart of the pale-face is too soft. The child of the red-man could sit by his side and laugh to see his struggles, and sing when he groaned."

"For the love of heaven," pleaded the affrighted Olive, "let us leave him and get to a place of safety."

"Leave him!" answered the squaw, in a voice that thrilled with emotion. "Leave him? You know not what you ask. A life worth as many thousands of his as there are sands on the sea-shore may be hanging upon it. But we will not stay here. There is yet a long trail to be traveled. Get up, dog!"

She kicked the prostrate form and made him struggle to his feet—a difficult task for one so cunningly fettered. But at last it was accomplished, and she loosened the bandages so as to enable him to walk. Then she took a stout thong of buck-skin from her girdle, looped it around his neck so that it would cut into the flesh and strangle him in case of resistance, and dragged him forward, as miserable, guilty, terrified a wretch as could have been found upon the entire face of the earth.

"For God's sake," he gasped, "have a little mercy."

"Did you have any on this poor girl?" she asked.

"If I must die, at least leave me in peace until then."

"If I could have my way," was the fierce response, "I would tie you to the tail of an unbroken colt, turn him loose, and let him drag you until every particle of flesh was torn off from your body inch by inch. But let him be dumb, or this!" and she pressed the sharp point of her knife against his

side until it penetrated through the clothing and pierced the flesh.

Avoiding the beaten trail, the squaw—followed by the white girl—led her wretched captive—often sneering at him for being the prisoner of a woman—toward the village of the Sioux. Whatever was her purpose she kept it hidden within her own brain—would answer no questions—paused only when Olive was compelled to rest, and even denied the renegade a single drop of water, and drove him forward with her knife when his pace became too slow to suit her.

But, as the day drew on and they were nearing the village of her people—were passing through a deep, dark valley so narrow that the branches of the trees on either side bent over and interlocked, she suddenly paused—motioned Olive, and forcibly dragged her captive to the ground, drew the cord still more tightly around his throat, and holding the point of her knife in one hand, directly above his heart, lifted a great stone in the other, and whispered in his shrinking ear :

“ Make the slightest noise—dare but to speak—breathe louder than common, and I swear by the Manitou that I will drive the knife through you before any one can come to your assistance.”

Her face, terrible in its vindictiveness, told that she would not scruple to carry out her threat, and he shivered for fear accident might accomplish it even if design did not.

He knew better than she did that they were near the spot where his new friends had encamped—that a scouting party were upon the hill directly above them—that a single call would bring them to his side—would bring him freedom. Yet he dare make no sound—was forced to motionless silence. The line that sustained his life was as brittle as a spider's web. The fierce eyes of the Indian girl were upon him—the hand that held the knife as firm as a rock. In fact a single loud breath would have ended in a parting groan, and desperate as was his situation in other respects, a sigh of relief escaped him as the little party of white men passed along and Burning Cloud laid aside the heavy stone and withdrew her terrible weapon.

“ Get up,” she whispered, “ and go on silently. By the Manitou of the pale-man as well as the red, I will strangle

you and bury my weapon in your breast if you utter a single sound or make an effort to let any know you are here."

He could do nothing but obey, and journeyed wearily on until she bade him pause. Then she gave the low, plaintive cry of the whippowil, thrice repeated, and in an instant after her brother was by her side—her brother and the Little Raven.

"You will guard him more carefully than your life or honor," commanded Burning Cloud. "Keep him here until you hear from me again. Come," she continued to Olive, who was wondering what the end of this strange journey would be, and taking her by the hand she avoided the wigwams.

"Oh! tell me," asked Olive, who, from what she had seen, was afraid of her companion, "oh! tell me where you are going to take me."

"To safety and to— Hiss!"

She drew her to the ground, and covered her with her blanket—bade her lie still as death, and left her side—left her alone for what seemed months. Then she returned, and her voice was sad and step heavy.

"Him I love," she said, no longer attempting to conceal her passion, "is a prisoner, and tied to the post of torture."

"Great heaven! The scout?"

"Even him. But don't talk. Come quickly."

"You have not yet told me where?"

Burning Cloud made no answer. She hurried the girl along regardless of all obstacles, and soon stopped in front of the walled up cavern and removed one of the stones.

"What is your lover's name?" she asked, and then, as she hesitated, continued, "Call him."

Olive did so—was answered, and a moment after they were fast locked in each other's arms, and lip was responding to lip.

"Back with the stone into its place," hoarsely commanded the squaw. "Don't stir from here on peril of your lives. Now to save him or die in the attempt!"

CHAPTER XVI.

TERRIBLE TORTURE.

AFTER a time the scout was removed from the post to which he had been bound, led into a wigwam, and having been fettered securely, was left to himself until the dawning of another day should afford the opportunity for torture.

So noted a hunter and scout as Beaver Tail could not be hurried out of the world. Great *lebat* must be given to the event—every one of the warriors must be notified—the torture must be of the superlative degree.

But, great was their astonishment when the sun rose again and the wigwam was found to be empty!

Numbers would have sworn that they had been constantly on the watch, and he had not gone forth—that, save the braves and the squaws, no one had been seen—that he must have vanished, even as the mist of morning before the hot sun.

Yet, even while they were discussing what could possibly have become of him, the scout was laughing in the forest, with the Indian girl, at the tumult his flight had caused.

"It was most mighty cute of you, Cloud," he said, "ter think of such a thing, and none but a smart woman like you could have posserbly carried it out, without bein' found out."

"I feared," she replied, looking up lovingly into his face, "that even after I had thrown the blankets and dresses into the wigwam, as Little Raven and I were walking along, that you would not be able to get your hands loose, and then all would have been useless."

"It was hard, that am er fact. Bat I l'arned somethin' of ther doctor, and as yer war smart enuff ter throw in er knife too, I managed ter git ther blade between my teeth and use it like er saw until ther confounded thongs parted. Bat sich er time as I had gittin' ther things on! And though I didn't see my way clear by a long shot, I couldn't help laffin' ter think how like ther Old Scratch I would look in yer woman's

toggery. But I had ter wait er long time berfore I dared venture out."

"The heart of Burning Cloud beat more swiftly than it had ever done before, and she trembled like the leaves of the poplar in the winds of winter."

"Yet somebody helped me, or I would have stuck fast, and more'n likely bin a-roastin' by this time. Did yer have er hand in that ar' fracas?"

"I told Little Raven and my brother," she answered, with a smile, "to go to the other side of the village and manage some way to draw the warriors there while I gathered a crowd of young squaws for you to mingle with and pass out of sight."

"And they did it most effectually! I never heard sich a screamin' and yellin' and dorg-fightin' in all my born days, so I jest peeped out ter see what ther row was, and findin' ther coast cl'ar, ventered."

"And soon was in a place of safety?"

"Yes, and more'n that, did er leetle matter of business ar ter you had gone."

"What was that?" she questioned, curiously.

"Ther old Medecine will find out when he goes wanderin' inter his devil's den ergin."

"Have you been to the secret cave of the Medicine?" she asked, trembling with fear as she heard his answer, and looking upon him with intense admiration as the bravest of the brave.

"I was thar. But I don't think I shall ever have any occasion ter go ergin."

"What did you see?"

"I'll tell yer some time when we ain't got quite so much on hand—some time when every thin' is peace and plenty around us and we've got nothing to do but to talk and make love," and he gave her a sample in advance.

"And now?" she questioned, as she released herself with some difficulty from his over-warm embrace, even though pleased with it.

"Wal, ther plan we have talked about seems ter be ther best, and I reckon we had better cling ter it."

"Then the Burning Cloud will go."

"It am about time."

Released, after another shower of kisses, the Indian girl stole back again into the village and mingled with the crowd that surrounded the Medicine. He was very much engaged in attempting to explain what he knew nothing about, and was boldly asserting that the Evil Spirit had carried off the scout bodily—that he had vanished like smoke and would never be seen again, when a muffled form forced its way to where he was standing, and, throwing aside the blanket that enfolded him, the missing prisoner stood revealed, and said with a half-smile:

"I don't think ther Old Scratch has got hold on me yet, whatever he may do some of these days."

The appearance of the Evil One, with hoofs, horns, claws and brimstone breath, could scarcely have produced a more decided impression. The warriors started back in terror, the squaws fled shrieking—the Medicine stood aghast, and had the scout been so minded he could have gone whichever way he willed without any one daring to molest him. But such was not his purpose. The part he was to play had been well thought of, and, after giving them time to become somewhat convinced that he was not a ghost escaped from the graveyard, he continued:

"Warriors of ther Sioux, thar's er good many of yer who have known me fer years and yer have always found my trail er honest and er open one. We have bin friends and I mean that we shall be so ergin. Ef I had been er mind I could have got whar yer never could have found me and it would have been mighty dangerous fer yer ter come."

"Beaver Tail is cunning upon the trail and brave on the war-path," replied the chief, obliged to say something.

"Wal, I don't make no boast of fightin'—it kaint my trade. But I won my name fairly in trappin' beaver, and yer know they are a cunnin' varmint."

"The skins he has taken are countless as the stars."

"Not quite so many as that. But I didn't come back to brag. Yer see, I trusted ye, and knew we would be friends ergin, when yer got ther black scales from before yer eyes, an' stood in ther sunshine, an' could see things as they am. So I came back with naked hands. S'arch me, ef yer have er

mind ter, an' yer won't find a weepson of any kind, not even so much as ther leetlest knife, erbout me."

"Whatever trail his moccasins may have traveled, his tongue is journeying that of truth."

"Yer kin bet every buffler-robe yer 've got on that, and win."

"Beaver Tail is wise. But he did not come back into the wigwams of the Sioux to tell them this?"

"Not a bit on it. But I had ter go through with what the law-makers of my people call ther preramble fust. What I come back fer war ter whisper in yer ears that yer have bin nussin' a pesky, p'ison sarpint in yer bosom, an' it am a-gittin' ready ter sting yer ter the heart—all on yer."

There was a great commotion, and every one pressed still nearer to catch his words, entirely forgetting their recent fears, while the confused old Medicine muttered mysteriously:

"I knew there was some great danger coming, from the black circles around the moon, and the rattling of the bones of the dead in their coffins."

"Wal, ef yer did, yer took good keer ter keep it ter yer-self, old fass and snake-skins and feathers."

"Let Beaver Tail go on," commanded the chief.

"And I'll make short work on it, too. The pale-face whom yer trusted an' treated as a brother, are the blackest kind of a traitor."

"Ugh!"

"He has bin stealin' away, an' has got a great lot of warriors hidden within a few miles, and they intend ter come an' butcher ye all—men an' wimin an' children—jist on ercount of his lies."

"How do you know this?"

"Wal, I found it out; an' ter show I war yer friend, I scouted around and found whar they am encamped, and got ther best of ther white-skinned devil, and have him jist as safe as yer ever did a wolf in a trap loaded with stones."

"Where is he?"

"That hain't the question now. In the fust place, yer must know that I speak the truth. Thar's the brave Young Bear, an' Burning Cloud, an' the Leetle Raven, as yer call them. See if all on them don't say the same thing."

"Beaver Tail speaks well."

"And ther truth."

The three whom he had designated came forward and gave their testimony, and then Young Bear told of having trailed the party, who were hidden in the forest awaiting the signal of the renegade, Parsons, and that there was quite a force and well armed.

"Thar!" exclaimed the scout, triumphantly; "hain't it jist as I said?"

"Beaver Tail is our brother!" answered a hundred voices.

"An' likely to be more so than yer knows on," with a sly wink at Burning Cloud.

"Where is the traitor? Let our brother tell, that we may put him to the torture, and then go and drive our enemies before us, as the wolves do the deer."

"Now, yer jist hain't a-goin' ter do any thin' of the kind! Yer kin have the traitor fer torture, an' welcome, fer I never saw any one that more desarved it. But, yer hain't a-goin' ter fight the rest. I'll go an' explain it all, an' send them about thar business. Will yer agree ter that?"

"There would be many scalps," mused the chief.

"An' yer'd be likely ter lose yer own, an' have the hull tribe wiped clean out of the 'arth."

A brief discussion followed, and a faithful promise having been given that no one of white skin should be molested but Parsons, the scout gave a signal to the brother of the Burning Cloud, who, with another brave, instantly disappeared. They soon returned, dragging along the renegade, and the shout that then rent the heavens could have been heard for miles.

"Now," said the scout, "yer can't expect me ter take er Fhand in yer punishment. It wouldn't be nateral fer me ter do so. But ef I had my way I'd whip him like er dorg."

It was an entirely new idea to the Indians, and immediately seized upon. Despite his struggles and his pleadings, the renegade was dragged to the post of torture—his garments cut away to his waist and his naked back exposed. Then a dozen hands brought tough sprouts of the hickory, and applied them with all the strength of their muscular arms.

The scout took advantage of the excitement attending the

torture to make a visit to the physician, whom he found among the happiest of mortals. Fearing that something might still happen to him and his beautiful Olive, the old scout secured the Young Bear and Little Raven as guides and protectors, and saw them fairly started to join the party waiting for the renegade.

"Yer kin tell them better nor I could," said the honest-hearted fellow, "all erbout it."

"And you?" asked the physician.

"Wal, I've got ter stay and see the ther thing out."

"And then?"

"Why," blushing like a school-boy detected in stealing his first kiss, "I'll have ter talk with ther Burning Cloud er leetle erbout that. She hain't got so fair er skin as yer wife that am ter be, doctor, but her heart am jest as white."

"I don't doubt it in the least."

"Ther fact am we perpose ter travel in double harness ther rest on our lives and stick up er wigwam somewhar, though I can't tell jest yet whar it will be."

"She is a good and brave girl."

"Yes, all of that, and ther Little Raven am ernuther. It hain't often yer kin find *sich* squaws. But, yer mustn't stand heah er talkin'. Git ter ther camp of ther white folks as soon as ever yer kin."

"But, we shall certainly see you again?"

"More'n likely. Yes, we—that am ther Cloud and me—will strike yer trail berfore long, and prehaps keep on with yer till ther end. I've quite er notion ter gi'n up this 'er' jerrymanderin' life and settle down, and I reckon diggin' gold will suit me as well as any thin' else, 'specially as it am in er country whar I kin hunt when I have er mind ter."

He wrung both their hands, went with them as far as possible upon the trail, and then returned to talk to his dusky love about their future. But as the shadows lengthened he was again attracted to the prisoner, and saw that the torture had been renewed.

He was standing tied to the fire-blackened post, evidently more dead than alive. Almost entirely stripped of his clothing, there was not a spot to be found that did not bear the marks of arrow, hatchet, knife or whip, and the blood that

had oozed forth had congealed and gave him the most ghastly appearance that could be imagined. His hair and whiskers were clotted and his face streaked with gore, and between the crimson lines was white as chalk, while the working of the muscles—twitching constantly with pain—made the strong-hearted scout shudder and grow faint even to gaze upon.

Night passed, and with every mark of the horrid torture removed, the village rung with notes of joy. It had become known that the white man wished to be adopted into the tribe—that he was to take the Burning Cloud for a wife and that he had already notified the chief to that effect.

Great, consequently, were the preparations, especially as the Young Bear and Little Raven would be married at the same time, and the simple ceremony having been performed, the entire tribe feasted—and made gluttons of themselves.

Then the newly married couples stole away to pass their honeymoon alone. Such a thing was common, and nothing was thought of it. But though one returned after the lapse of a few days, of the other nothing was ever seen, and the scout and his bride became only a remembrance among the Sioux

CHAPTER XVII.

AFTER THE CLOUDS—THE SUN!

THE party to which the renegade Parsons had applied for assistance waited a long time for his coming and were about to give him up, when they were surprised by the appearance of the doctor and the beautiful Olive; and when all had been explained they waxed most exceedingly wroth and determined to leave the traitor to his fate.

In that they were wise.

Notwithstanding all the promises given to the scout, they had numerous spies out, and upon the first symptom of retaliation they would have ambushed, and cut to pieces the

entire party—so little faith is there to be put in the word of the generality of Indians.

That the renegade would be punished far more effectually than they would have had the heart to carry out they did not doubt, and leaving him to his fate they returned to the waiting wagons, resumed the journey that had been interrupted, and pressed forward to make up for the precious time that had been lost.

It was almost as heaven for the doctor and Olive to be together again and in safety, and each had so much to tell that the long summer days were far too short. The sufferings through which they had passed made their love doubly dear, and they longed for the time when they could be joined in marriage.

That, however, was denied them until some settlement could be reached. But while thinking thus of their own happiness they never failed to remember the scout and Burning Cloud with tears of gratitude, and as the days lengthened out into a week, they wondered very much what had become of them.

One night their suspense was unexpectedly relieved. The couple were found waiting for the train on the banks of a river, and thenceforward the scout resumed his old position of guide, and as they were gathered around the little camp-fire he filled in the outlines of the story that the doctor had merely sketched.

When the first frontier fort was reached there was a double wedding, and though Olive shone in all her wondrous beauty yet the dusky child of the forest almost rivaled her in her semi-savage charms. This proceeding the scout, though more from bashfulness than for any other reason, had somewhat opposed.

"We have been married once," he said, "and ther Cloud am satisfied and so am I."

"It was a heathen ceremony," suggested Olive, who, womanlike, had her peculiar notions of what constituted the fitness of such things.

"Wal, it mought be, but thar hain't no priest nor prayer-book that kin bind us any tighter than we now am, nor make us any more true."

"That may be. But remember you come of a Christian people, and must educate your wife."

"When I hain't got no edercation myself!" he laughed.

Nevertheless he consented after having a talk with the Indian girl, and finding it was her wish to be married by the "Medicine of the Manitou of the pale-faces," and so it was done.

"And speakin' of the Medicine," the scout said, a few days afterward, when they were talking over the subject, "reminds me of ther old one of ther Sioux."

"What has become of him?" questioned the doctor. "I owe him a deep debt of vengeance, but I fear it will never be paid."

"Ef it hain't by this time I am very much mistaken."

"You did not kill him?"

"Not exactly, but I reckon it resulted in ther same thing."

"I do not understand how that can be."

"Wal, I'll tell yer, and that puts me in mind that I promised you, Cloud, ter do so some day. Don't yer remember what I said erbout er leetle business?"

"She never forgets what her brave tells," was the truthful and characteristic answer of the Indian woman, who looked up to her husband as no one of purely white skin would ever have done.

"Fust I must give yer er description of what kind of er den the old Satan kept.

He proceeded at length to do so, and then described how he had removed the ash and untied the animals so that both they and the terrible serpents could have full play.

"He must have met a fearful death," replied the physician, with a shudder.

"Thar hain't no doubt on that. Ef he chanced to miss ther sarpints—which I don't think he could—thar b'ar and ther wildcat must have gone fer him savagely and chewed him up in erbout no time."

"But his death was as nothing compared to that of the wretched white man."

"No, heaven keep us all from sich er one!"

The journey was finished without accident, and a few years

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later both the doctor and the scout had made themselves comfortable—one by practice and the other by patient industry and hunting. But never have they—never will they forget the terrible scenes through which they passed, and their children hear the story told with shudders. What then must have been the reality?

THE END.

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